ROUTLEDGE CRITICAL STUDIES IN BUDDHISM

The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China

Charisma, money, enlightenment

Dan Smyer Yü



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Focusing on contemporary Tibetan Buddhist revivals in the Tibetan regions of the Sichuan and Qinghai Provinces in China, this book explores the intricate entanglements of the Buddhist revivals with cultural identity, state ideology, and popular imagination of Tibetan Buddhist spirituality in contemporary China. In turn, the author explores the broader sociocultural implications of such revivals.

Based on detailed cross-regional ethnographic work, the book demonstrates that the revival of Tibetan Buddhism in contemporary China is intimately bound up with both the affirming and negating forces of globalization, modernity, politics of religion, indigenous identity reclamation, and the market economy. The analysis highlights the multidimensionality of Tibetan Buddhism in relation to different religious, cultural, and political constituencies of China. By recognizing the greater contexts of China's politics of religion and of the global status of Tibetan Buddhism, this book presents an argument that the revival of Tibetan Buddhism is not an isolated event limited merely to Tibetan regions; instead, it is a result of the intersection of both local and global transformative changes. The book is a useful contribution to students and scholars of Asian religion and Chinese studies.

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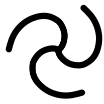
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1 Introduction: *mise-en-scène* of Tibetan Buddhism in China

The polygon of Tibetan Buddhist revivals in the twenty-first century

Toward midnight, late June of 2001, a police team comprised of Han Chinese and Tibetan officers surrounded a humble inn nestled in the foothills below the Larung Five Sciences Buddhist Academy (བླ་རུང་ནང་བསྟན་ཆོས་གླིང་།) in Larung Gar (གསེར་རྟ་བླ་རུང་སྒར); these foothills lie in Sertar County of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. There, both Han and Tibetan pilgrims were awakened abruptly from their sleep and ordered to show their identification cards. The police commanded everyone to leave the area before 6:00 the next morning. This group of pilgrims, gathered together from different regions all across Tibet and China, had traveled from afar in hopes of paying homage to Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok (མཁན་པོ་འཇིགས་མེད་ཕུན་ཚོགས།), the renowned and charismatic Tibetan Buddhist teacher who founded the Academy.

Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok and his Academy were primarily responsible for the revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism in Kham and Amdo, two eastern Tibetan regions in current Sichuan and Qinghai Provinces. Many monks, nuns, and pilgrims affectionately addressed him as *chos rgyal* (ཆོས་རྒྱལ།), which means the King of Dharma. In 1980, he informally founded a small monastic college at Larung Gar. At the time, the handful of students were all Tibetan. The official establishment of the Academy did not take place until 1987, when the late 10th Panchen Lama requested Sertar County to grant it recognition. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's revival of Tibetan Buddhism was not limited to Tibetans, it also strongly emphasized cross-cultural and cross-regional outreach. There were two landmark events which permanently connected this revival of Tibetan Buddhism to non-Tibetans. In 1987, Khenpo led over 10,000 Tibetan monks on a pilgrimage to Mt. Wutai in Shanxi Province. Mt. Wutai is a sacred Buddhist site, considered the abode of Bodhisattva Manjusri. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok himself is revered as an incarnation of Manjusri, and according to a few of Khenpo's close disciples who were present then, this particular pilgrimage created a spectacular scene. Crowds of Chinese pilgrims and onlookers tagged along. Upon returning to Sertar, Khenpo and the monks found that a large number of Han Chinese lay and monastic practitioners then followed them into the mountains of Kham. In the history of Tibetan Buddhism, this was the largest number of Han Buddhists to become part of a Tibetan Buddhist order in an organized fashion (Sonam Darje 2000).

Although the sectarian association of Khenpo's Academy is Nyingmapa (རྙིང་མ་པ།), the oldest branch of Tibetan Buddhism, it has, since its founding in the

1980s, become the largest center of the contemporary non-sectarian movement of Tibetan Buddhism outside of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. In addition to its profound religious significance, this non-sectarian movement has also become a movement toward the revitalization of Tibetan culture. In concordance with this cultural revitalization, long-term monastic residents at the Academy increased from the handful of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's initial disciples to more than 12,000, including approximately 2,000 Han Chinese monks, nuns, and lay practitioners, as well as a number of practitioners from North America and Western Europe. It became the largest Buddhist academy in the world and one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations in cultural Tibet.

However, when the Chinese state's personnel descended on this remote Tibetan region in the summer of 2001, the regular instructional schedule of the Academy was disrupted. The state personnel came as a "work team" (工作组 gongzuozu) consisting of staff from the State Administration for Religious Affairs, the United Front Work Department, and local and provincial policemen. "Work teams" are a common tool used by the state in order to suppress social occurrences which take place within China's constitutional and legal framework, but which the state perceives as a threat to its definition of social order or its ideological framework. Time again, the Chinese state was not agreeable with large gatherings of religious adherents. This time a large Tibetan Buddhist group was its target. Thus the objective of the work team was to disperse the growing population of both Tibetan and non-Tibetan residents of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy.

The Chinese state's attempt to suppress the Academy did not last long. Since the passing of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok in 2004, the academy has not only gradually resumed its instructional routines but has also expanded its outreach to non-Tibetans. Pilgrims and students intending long-term residence continue to stream into the Academy. Meanwhile, the Academy has extended their systematic Dharma teachings from the Larung Valley into the cyberspace. Its website, Wisdom and Compassion Buddhism Web in Chinese, English, and Tibetan languages has become one of the most interactive Buddhist teaching-oriented websites in the world. It facilitates off-campus study-groups in different parts of China by archiving audio and visual records of Dharma teachings as well as by broadcasting live teaching sessions by its important monastic instructors. In addition to this cyber-outreach effort, the public lectures of Khenpo Sonam Darje (བསོད་ནམས་དར་རྒྱས།), one of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's first disciples, at Peking University, Fudan University, and Nanjing University in 2010 and 2011 have further contributed to the popularity of the Academy and Tibetan Buddhism on both local and global scales.

* * *

I do not intend this book to be a narrative concerning the rise of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy in China or the global religious landscape. Other scholars, Buddhist practitioners, and activist organizations, such as David Germano, Karma Phuntsok, and the International Campaign for Tibet have already made these important contributions. Instead, I am concerned with contemporary Sino-Tibetan Buddhist interactions as understood within the contexts of the politics of religion,

the sociocultural ramifications of the market economy in China, and the globalization of Tibetan Buddhism. I wish to explore these three facets of Tibetan Buddhist revitalization, and particularly that of the Nyingmapa sect, based on my fieldwork in both eastern Tibetan regions and urban China.

First, the global market system has played a critical role in the revitalization of Tibetan Buddhist traditions. The Tibetans involved in this unprecedented religious revitalization are not static and localized, nor do they lack agency in determining the course of changes brought about by the global economic system via China's modernization program. In the last fifteen years, there has been a consensus in Western scholarly research in which China's "liberalizing policy" toward Tibetans was the primary backdrop of the Tibetan Buddhist revitalization. This contention was particularly expressed in many of the works collected in Buddhism in *Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, edited by Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (Goldstein and Kapstein 1998). This assessment was most pertinent to the sociopolitical reality of China in the decades of the 1980s and the 1990s. During this time period a cultural phenomenon arose among Tibetans called "Tibetanization," which, according to Robert Barnett, refers to the then "converging interests" of the Chinese state and the Tibetans (Barnett 2006:38). Out of its globally strategic moves to reverse the negative image of China's human rights and ethnic minority issues, and to attract foreign investments, the Chinese state encouraged Tibetan cultural expressions throughout Tibetan regions within its political territory. Meanwhile, Tibetans also wanted to revive their severely injured cultural traditions, as Barnett remarks, "Tibetan officials were thus able to embark upon and facilitate new initiatives that involved specifically Tibetan cultural expression" (ibid.:38).

The rapid growth of the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy was part and parcel of this Tibetanization era. Its official establishment was congratulated in 1993 by Zhao Puchu, the late chairman of China's National Buddhist Association. When Germano went to the Academy in the late 1990s, the revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism on the campus of the Academy was inevitably equated with the revitalization of Tibetan cultural identity (Germano 1998:53–94). However, since the turn of the twenty-first century, China's "liberalizing" posture has become rather questionable. The state has taken various measures to suppress or contain the ongoing Tibetan Buddhist revitalization. "Tibetanization" in this respect is no longer encouraged, but rather suppressed because of the obviously now diverging interests of the Chinese state and Tibetans. The state's suppressive attitude reached a climax during the Tibetan uprisings in March 2008.

However, the cessation of state-sanctioned "Tibetanization" does not mean that Tibetan religious and cultural revivals have also stopped. They continue, though mostly within China's globally-linked market. The force of change brought by economic globalization is also initiating simultaneous cultural globalization and localization especially in China's popular realm which, according to Yunxiang Yan's research, is left aside by the Chinese state "because it can be used to lessen the social tensions of the post-1989 era and to create an image of prosperity and happiness" (Yunxiang Yan 2002:39). The logic of how the state exercises its power in the popular realm is similar to that of "Tibetanization." Its lessening control

over the popular realm inadvertently permits cultural, religious, and political interstices as alternative social space in which the revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism, especially Nyingmapa, is inextricably linked with economic and cultural globalization. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, Tibetan Buddhism under the rule of the Chinese has rapidly entered what I call its "marketing era" in which it is reviving but paying the price of being commercialized.

The second facet that I wish to recapitulate is that the ongoing Tibetan Buddhist revitalization has not been uniform everywhere in Tibetan regions. Its teleology and expressions vary from sect to sect. In particular, it is worthwhile to compare the Nyingmapa with the Gelukpa. While the revival of the Gelukpa has manifested in street demonstrations against the rule of the Chinese state since the 1980s, the Nyingmapa have mostly focused on reconstructing their ruined monasteries and engaging in lineage-based teachings to both Tibetans and non-Tibetans. Nyingma monastic personnel have not been overtly confrontational toward the Chinese state. Germano noticed that the revival of the Nyingmapa distanced itself from "any involvement with overt political protests" (ibid.:71). This seemingly apolitical aspect of the Nyingmapa revival has remained unchanged in the ten years since Germano's observation in Kham.

As for Gelukpa monasteries, in *Circle of Protest: Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising* (Schwartz 1994), Ronald Schwartz points out that during the late 1980s, Geluk monks in large monastic establishments in Lhasa, including the Drepung, Gandan, and Sera monasteries, visibly involved themselves in the cause of Tibetan nationalism that is closely linked with the 14th Dalai Lama's Tibetan government in exile. Buddhism obviously became a means of protest against the rule of the Chinese state. Tibetan nationalism was loudly pronounced by the political activities of Tibetan monks and nuns. Schwartz also found that both monastic and lay populations in Lhasa utilized *khorra* (སྐོར་ར།), or circumambulation of sacred sites, in marching around the Jokhang Monastery and shouting slogans for Tibetan independence (ibid.:26). This political orientation of a Buddhist practice was instrumental in creating a critical mass of protestors in Lhasa. Schwartz says, "By combining *bskor-ba* [khorra] with symbols of Tibetan nationhood – the Dalai Lama, the flag – the Drepung monks forged a link between the powerful motivation that underlies religious ritual and the national consciousness that divides Tibetans from Chinese" (Schwartz 1999:236). However, in the end, these demonstrations were ruthlessly suppressed by the Chinese armed police and military. The religious aspect of Gelukpa in Lhasa suffered a large setback (Goldstein 1998:46–8), although it has gained tremendous political momentum internationally. The same circumstances were repeated during the Tibetan uprisings in March 2008, the majority of which occurred in places where Gelukpa monasteries are the centers of local communities.

I find that the Nyingmapa revitalization in Kham and Amdo runs on its own course and differs significantly from its Gelukpa counterpart. The teleologies of the sects' revitalizations appear to have divergent orientations, despite their doctrinal commonalities. To the Gelukpa, the revival of Tibetan Buddhism is synonymous with the revival of Tibetan cultural identity. Gelukpa monks' and nuns' overt confrontations with the Chinese state are recognized as acts of cultural

and political resistance, whereas the regional and global activities of Nyingmapa lamas suggest their more soteriological intent to globalize Tibetan Buddhism. In this respect, Tibetan Buddhism overlaps with Tibetan identity in both sects; however, in the Nyingmapa revival the former is not merely eclipsed by the latter but is rather imbued with soteriological and cross-cultural goals – involving a worldwide dissemination of Nyingmapa-based teachings as well as a raising of public awareness for the Chinese about the positive values of Tibetan religion and culture.

And last but not least, the presence of Han Chinese Buddhists in the Nyingmapa revitalization reflects the complex social, political, and psychological conditions of Tibetan Buddhist revivals in particular, and religion in general, within contemporary China. The presence of these Han Chinese Buddhists has been minimally discussed in scholarly literature. Among the very few works concerning Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China, Gray Tuttle's *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China* (2005) and Matthew Kapstein's edited volume *Buddhism between Tibet and China* (2009) mostly focus on the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist ties prior to the founding of the PRC. In Goldstein and Kapstein's edited volume (1998), Germano is the only contributor who mentions Chinese Buddhists who were studying the Nyingmapa version of Tibetan Buddhism in Kham. According to his recollection about his stay at Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy, he saw Chinese Buddhists "who made the long trek from their homeland to visit Khenpo in his residence; some of them [were] considered to be very advanced students … " (Germano 1998:68). Following on the presence of Han Chinese in Kham, Germano briefly touched on "modernism," "communism," and "Han imperialism" (ibid.:90). These phrases, to me, have indexical value in helping us understand modern and contemporary Sino-Tibetan relations. They deserve a deeper and broader analysis.

Herewith, what I see in the complexity of the ongoing Tibetan Buddhist revitalization, especially at the turn of the twenty-first century, is that Han Chinese Buddhists, in addition to their partaking in pilgrimage activities in Tibetan monasteries, have been among the primary financial sources for Tibetan monastic reconstruction and cross-regional teaching activities. Han Chinese Buddhists from metropolitan centers of China are serving as an integral part of the regional and global connectivity of Tibetan Buddhism in Kham and Amdo. They are responsible for introducing Web technologies to Tibetan lamas as a wide-reaching means to disseminate Buddhist teachings, re-educate the Chinese public about Tibetan history and culture, and raise resources to aid recovery from the past destruction by the Chinese state, while subversively dodging more recently suppressive acts.

The increasing number of Han Chinese who embrace Tibetan Buddhism also mirrors the current state of religion in China, where a perceived "spiritual crisis" is widely acknowledged in popular discourses concerning the Chinese state's marginalization of religion and the deterioration of state-sanctioned socialist morals. The alliance of Han Chinese Buddhists with Tibetans compels us to engage in a new way of looking at the intricacy of contemporary Sino-Tibetan relations, which, for the West, have been traditionally represented by the relationship between the Chinese state and the Tibetan government in exile. This limited

perception of governments as sole representations of their citizens has contributed to both scholarly and popular conceptions of Tibetans and Chinese that are essentialized. Thus, in the West, Tibetans are identified as religious whereas the Chinese are atheistic, Tibetans are the victims and the Chinese are villains of Communism. In an inversed fashion, the Chinese state has portrayed the Tibetans as "backwards" and "feudalistic" while promoting itself as modern, progressive, and therefore advanced. However, the growing alliance between Chinese Buddhists and their Tibetan teachers' communities in the twenty-first century is subverting this rigid dichotomization. Through the popular Buddhist culture of China, both Tibetans and Chinese are starting to see each other's humanness and humanity. Tibetan lamas find it effective to utilize traditional Chinese stories of morality and modern scientific terms as analogies and metaphors in teaching their Chinese disciples. Meanwhile, Chinese Buddhists host private meetings and create Web pages to highlight the spiritual significance of Tibetan Buddhist civilization. This popular Sino-Tibetan Buddhist alliance is undoubtedly undermining the Chinese state's constructs of Old and New Tibet, which serve only to glorify socialist China's role in the creation of Tibetans' current state of well-being in contrast to that of the demonized, backward, traditional Tibet.

The 14th Dalai Lama has in fact noticed the increasing conversion of Chinese to Tibetan Buddhism, both in and outside China. His global campaign for the Tibetan cause is thus emphasizing a more nuanced understanding of the Chinese population and is making efforts to build political alliance with those who have converted to Tibetan Buddhism as well as those who are concerned about the Chinese state's human rights violations. Since the late 1990s, the Dalai Lama and his representative institutions, such as the International Campaign for Tibet, have sustained their ongoing effort to initiate public forums and round-table dialogues with numerous individual Chinese Buddhists, Tibet enthusiasts, and political dissidents, in addition to their annual official negotiation activities with the Chinese state. These contemporary Buddhist interactions between the Tibetans and the Chinese concerning the politics of the Tibet Question and Tibetan religious revivals are rarely discussed among scholars.

The charismatic theme of Tibetan Buddhist revivals

The central theme of the book is what I call the "Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok phenomenon" as an integral part of Tibetan religious revitalization in Kham and Amdo regions, currently placed in Sichuan and Qinghai Provinces. The attributes of this phenomenon are charismatic, trans-cultural, cross-regional, tech-savvy, conversant with modern science and familiar with the economic system, awareness-raising, and seemingly non-confrontational toward the state. The heart of this phenomenon is the charisma of prominent Tibetan lamas actively transmitting tantric teachings to both Tibetans and non-Tibetans in China. This type of charisma is what Stanley Tambiah calls "religious charisma" (1984:325) with a transcendental orientation; however, dissimilar to the conventional understanding of charisma, it is not exclusively a property of religious personalities in the context of the current trans-cultural Tibetan Buddhist revitalization. Instead, this

unique religious charisma of Tibetan lamas, especially *tulkus* (སྤྲུལ་སྐུ།), or reincarnate lamas, has heterogeneous incarnations and manifestations in both the personal and the collective sense. This charisma is reborn in a person but reinstates itself in a collective environment, such as a monastery or a sacred site or a global religious community. Its nascent state of inner revolution, in the Buddhist sense, continues to manifest its vitality in a physical body, namely the reincarnate lama consecrated by his lineage-based monastic or lay institution. It appears both ascetic and extravagant when it need be. It eases in and out of the greed of the commercial realm and the inner state of modern consumers, and yet retains its Buddhist essentials. It is resilient enough that it does not die but continues to find its sentient presence when the person who embodies it dies.

On January 7, 2004, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok passed away in a hospital in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. The revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism in Kham and Amdo did not cease with the loss of this charismatic lama. It became less concentrated on the Khenpo Academy, but was diffused into other parts of Tibet, China, and beyond. Meanwhile, along with other charismatic lamas from different parts of Kham and Amdo, Khenpo's first disciples, such as Khenpos Sonam Darje (བསོད་ནམས་དར་རྒྱས།), Tselchem Lodru (ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་བློ་གྲོས།), and Yeshi Phuntsok (ཡེ་ཤེས་ཕུན་ཚོགས།), have emerged as charismatic tantric masters teaching a broader audience from both Tibet and China. The pedagogical and methodic differences between them and their master is that they are well-versed in Chinese philosophical systems and are fully employing modern printing and communication technologies to disseminate Tibetan Buddhism on both regional and global scales. Their messages and images streamed into the World Wide Web are frequently viewed by Chinese Buddhist netizens, and their books and tracts are often religious bestsellers in China, regardless of their lack of official ISBN codes. They still enjoy fast circulation among religion-hungry readers in the backrooms of numerous private bookstores and Buddhist souvenir shops in China. The centerpieces of these Tibetan Buddhist images and publications are lamas; not those voiceless lamas on the cover pages of tourist brochures or in glossy coffee-table pictorials of Tibetan landscapes, but those who bring to the audience the Tibetan version of Buddhism and those whose names have already been synonymous with particular tantric lineages. This is Buddhist charisma at work, in a manner which is distinctly Tibetan.

It is noteworthy to mention the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's meeting with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1990 as part of his groundwork for the current charismatic presence of Nyingma lamas among Tibetans and Chinese. According to Khenpo Sonam Darje's narrative, it was the Dalai Lama who initiated the meeting while Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok and his pilgrimage entourage were in Nepal. During the meeting, the Dalai Lama requested Khenpo to perform a *terton* (གཏེར་སྟོན། hidden Dharma treasure revealer) initiation and exchanged gifts with him. This meeting was included in Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's biography in Chinese, written by Khenpo Sonam Darje. Since the meeting and the dissemination of the biography, the charisma of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok has been intimately associated with the Dalai Lama; thus it has contributed to the Han Chinese Buddhists' positive acceptance of His Holiness as Tibet's ultimate spiritual leader.

The political dimension of the ongoing charismatic revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism is interlaced with the global presence of the Dalai Lama. The Chinese state's suppression of large Tibetan Buddhist communities, such as Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy, is intrinsically linked to its own reflexive allegations regarding the Dalai Lama's political logic. "Taking control of one reincarnate lama and his monastery means taking control of one area of Tibet" (He Zhenhua 2009); thus, the growth of one monastery also means, to the Chinese state, the growth of separatism. However, from the perspective of charisma studies, the Chinese state's political allegations of separatist treason and its own self-proclaimed moral superiority heavily rely upon its negative dependency on the Dalai Lama's global charismatic presence – meaning that without the Dalai Lama as a target to attack, the Chinese state's construct of New Tibet would lose its moral and ideological ground.

The Tibet Question has intensified ever since the 14th Dalai Lama went into exile in 1959 and the Chinese state began its global diatribe against the Dalai Lama and his Western allies. In this respect, the Tibet Question is nothing but the Dalai Lama Question, and therefore both a religious and political "charisma question." The Chinese state recognizes the charismatic power of the Dalai Lama, albeit negatively, by calling him and his cabinet the "Dalai Clique." Clique, or *jituan* in Chinese, is a derogatory term – a nomenclature of socialist China describing individuals and organizations considered subversive and challenging to its rule and ideology. For example, there was the "Khrushchev Clique" of the Soviet Union in the 1950s, and the "Lin Biao anti-Party, anti-Revolutionary Clique" of 1970s China. The political function of naming a person or an entity "clique" is to downgrade its popularity and therefore make it containable and morally base. The Tibet Question, as the Dalai Lama Question, is not as simplistic and black-and-white as the Chinese state perceives. Its opponent is not as easily reducible as it wishes. The Dalai Lama Question is a question of a living belief as "a conscious reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of universal compassion" (Robert Thurman 2008:3) in all Tibetan regions.

In the Tibetan context, religion does not manifest itself merely in doctrines and institutions but, most critically, grows its roots in the consciousness of the common individual as well as in the unique physical landscape of Tibetan plateaux where religious sacred sites are commonplace and pilgrimages are routine. Furthermore, the position of the Dalai Lama is both a political and a cultural institution, in addition bearing a religious function. Its institutionality precedes the individuality of the person who bears the title. The Dalai Lama, as Tibet's foremost institution, has been sustained by successively chosen individuals based on prophecies and oracle readings. From a modern scientific perspective, the history and religious manifestation of this unique institution appears outlandish and fantastic; however, its material culture is as real and tangible as one can see and feel. Its cultural function generates no less collective psychology than a modern constitution-based polity. In fact, the collective psychology of what the Dalai Lama represents is much deeper and more complex than its modern counterparts, as it intersects both the spiritual and the material realities of a human society as the successive Dalai Lamas have been both religious and secular leaders of Tibetans. Since the 14th

Dalai Lama went to India and the Chinese state abolished Tibet's theocratic polity, the Tibetans in China have not ceased in their deep emotion and affection toward the Dalai Lama. Those – such as Chinese statesmen – who fixate themselves on modern progress as a forward-moving temporal process, would smear the institution of the Dalai Lama as a "decadent," "backward," and "feudalistic" system. However, if one can temporarily bracket a modern linear value judgment, the Dalai Lama, as a combination of spiritual and secular authorities, is profoundly rooted in the consciousness of Tibetans, in the Durkheimian sense – in which collective effervescence is routine, not a novelty, among many Tibetan communities. This type of collective effervescence is centered upon charismatic lamas.

This is the cultural context in which this book is written. The reincarnation system operates in the same way throughout Tibet, and bases itself everywhere on the same Buddhist logic – that although they may not know their next lifetime's destination, all sentient lives undergo rebirth; enlightened ones, especially bodhisattvas, have the ability to choose the realms of their rebirths in accordance with their bodhisattva vows. Reincarnate lamas, such as the Dalai Lama and Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, are revered as bodhisattvas. They are playing the pivotal role in revitalizing Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan cultural identity. While their unifying effects are irrefutable, both global and regional forces of change, mainly through economic globalization, are engendering complex representations of the charismatic lamas in the public space of China.

Interpreting the entanglement of charisma, money, and enlightenment

Bonds of charisma

Throughout this book, contemporary Tibetan Buddhist revitalization – especially amongst the Nyingmapa – is understood not as an isolated event occurring only in the geographic regions of Tibet, but rather also as a global and cross-regional event linking Tibetan lamas and their communities with non-Tibetan populations from both China and abroad. The charisma of Tibetan lamas is at the center of my narratives and analyses. I treat charisma as a composite, fluid quality whose inner contents are susceptible to different representations, dependent upon the volitions of those who represent it. It is composite, because it encompasses not only the personality of a given lama but, most crucially, is transcendental, transpersonal, institutional, communal, and place-based. The transcendental and transpersonal dimensions of charisma refer to the soteriology of Tibetan Buddhism, which is a world religion with a dynamic global history of crossing multiple cultural, linguistic, and psychological boundaries. The institutional, communal, and place-based dimensions emphasize the collective nature of Tibetan Buddhist charisma. While the charisma of a given reincarnate lama is consecrated in its prophesied human community, it is also marked on the landscape where the community is situated; such place-based markings are often centered upon a previous incarnation's solitary meditation cave or within mountain spirits who, according to local religious folklore, have sanctioned the lama's lineage for many lifetimes.

Charisma, in such genuine form, is what Max Weber terms "pure charisma," or charisma in status of nascendi, in which the awe-inspiring quality of a given individual "revolutionizes men [sic] 'from within'" (Weber 1978:1115). This exposition of genuine charisma is apposite to the case of Tibetan religious revitalization, but has not yet seen itself in much interpretive connection with contemporary studies of Tibetan Buddhism.

In his essay "Re-membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet," Germano mentions the "miraculous nature" of the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's charismatic presence among Tibetans and Chinese, but this charisma is not given enough interpretive attention perhaps because "even by Tibetan standards [it] seemed to stretch one's imagination" (Germano 1998:57). Charlene Makley, in *The Violence of Liberation*, recognizes *tulkus* as "transcendent Buddhist agents" (Makley 2008:33); however, the weight of her actual ethnographic accounts and analyses is mostly placed on *tulkus*' "male-dominated world of interregional politics" and the "unmarked nature" of their sociocultural status among Tibetans (ibid.:39). Both Germano's and Makley's disbelief or disinterest in the inner forces of Tibetan Buddhist charisma is common in contemporary Tibetan studies, in which the inner and intangible dimension of Tibetan *tulkus* is overshadowed by analyses of the politics of Tibetan religion and cultural identity.

My interpretive interest in the inner nature of charismatic lamas does not downplay the imperative intersection of Tibetan religion and cultural identity. To me, it is given that both overlap one another – as they are in a symbiotic relationship. My purpose of underscoring the inner contents of religious personalities and institutions is twofold: first, to recognize the material manifestation of religious charisma and explore the manner in which it emanates inner forces of psychological and sociopolitical change, and secondly, in turn, to assess the ways in which these inner contents and charisma are represented and reshaped by political and economic forces.

My use of Weberian nomenclatures of charisma studies is not intended to formularize the charismatic expressions of Tibetan lamas with Weber's linear model of charisma, which predetermines the course of charisma from birth to routinization and demise (Weber 1978:1121). Weber's model, in fact, decontextualizes and reifies the complexity of both the inner and outer configurations and representations of charisma in diverse cultural and political environments. In this book I do not focus on charisma solely as a phenomenon of personality, examples of which have been fitted into Weber's model in prolific scholarly works spanning from the 1960s to the 1980s. This notable timeframe coincided with the geopolitical, dualistic positioning of large nation-states during the Cold War. It also reflected the general ethos of North America at the time, characterized as a "culture of narcissism" (Lasch 1978), as North Americans were experiencing a collectively felt sense of identity crisis in the midst of the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the popular spiritual experiments with psychoactive sacraments and gurus of alternative belief systems. In response to these political and psychological conditions both domestic and international, scholars of charisma studies produced copious amounts of theoretical literature; however, to a large extent many of them – aligning with Weber's typology of charisma – reified

charisma mostly as a product of personality attributes (Csordas 1997:136). Key words such as "seizure," "blind faith," and "unreflective imitation" frequently appeared in the scholarly conceptualization of charisma. Arthur Schweitzer's *The Age of Charisma* (Schweitzer 1984) is a representative work of that era. In essence, its proffered varieties of charisma did not deviate from Weber's typology except in different nomenclatures. His list of twentieth-century charismatics such as Nehru, Mao, and John F. Kennedy reflected the geopolitical landscape of the time. The rise and the fall of these charismatic individuals perfectly fit Weber's linear developmental model of charisma from the nascent stage to routinization and decline. Works on religious charisma at the time, particularly situated in established ecclesiastic systems, were rare.

In the context of Tibetan Buddhism, my understanding of charisma is both personal and institutional. It diverges from Weber's model by affirming that the charisma of Tibetan lamas is a long-lived sociocultural phenomenon. The institution of Tibetan Buddhism does not necessarily suffocate charisma with its worldly economic and organizational pressures. Instead, institutional involvement can be seen here as a mechanism to preserve charisma's initial vigor – thus eternally engendering inner revolution. In this respect, approaches in post-Weberian charisma studies are more apt in terms of the Tibetan case. The works of Stanley Tambiah (Tambiah 1984), Ronald Glassman and William Swatos (Glassman and Swatos 1986), Charles Lindholm (Lindholm 1990), and Thomas Csordas (Csordas 1997), for instance, go beyond Weber's typology by linking charisma with other theoretical traditions such as Durkheim's collective conscience, Mauss' idea of collective spirit embedded in gift exchange, and Codrington's use of *mana*. On the theoretical level, my post-Weberian position is meant to decenter charisma from the personality of the leader (Csordas 1997:138). At the same time, it is also meant to de-typologize charisma by contextualizing the charismatic in a particular cultural, religious, and political milieu. Like Tambiah, I also wish to assert that tradition and pure charisma in the context of Buddhist traditions are not necessarily diametrically opposed. In Tambiah's association of the Theravada saints of the forest with the traditional Buddhist idea of arahantship, and my observation of Tibetan *tulkus* and their monastic system, the relationship between traditional institutions and genuine charisma can be also understood in symbiotic terms. The genuine charisma of both Theravada *arahants* and Tibetan *tulkus* are inextricably part and parcel of the traditionally conceived and scripturally sanctioned image of the historical Buddha. Both Theravada saints and Tibetan *tulkus* acquire their charisma through respective monastic systems which are directly responsible for charismatic education. Thus charisma, in this Buddhist context, is the result of the symbiotic efforts of the charismatic and the institution where he or she is situated.

In this symbiotic relation, I see charisma in the Tibetan context as a "meaning-giving central power" (Lindholm 1990:291). It is an institution itself, and an inherent part of Buddhist history. Its continuation and preservation take place in a culturally specific *sangha*, a worldly institution inaugurated for an other-worldly purpose – namely, Buddhist enlightenment. In reading Edward Shils' elucidation of Weber's notion of charisma, Lindholm remarks, "an innate human quest for a coherent and meaningful way of understanding the world is the sacred heart of

every viable social formation" (ibid.:291). In this manner, charisma in the Tibetan case has a generative function for both internal and external orders and meanings. It cannot be limited to a Weberian scheme of "irrational" and "epileptoid" personalities. In other words, the charismatic relation is not unilaterally initiated and expressed merely from the charismatic to the "irrational" and "entranced" crowd. If it were, the individuals in the crowd would thus appear indiscriminate, gullible, and even blind, as persons whose spiritual and material rationalities and agencies were absent. By affirming the meaning-giving power of charisma, I emphasize the collective nature of Tibetan lamas' charisma based on its material manifestations: it possesses historical records; it is institutionally discerned; it is communally sanctioned; it saturates both its ecological environment and human community; and it is materially sustained by its monastic institution and lay adherents. Herein, charisma is polygonal. It is a center, but cannot exist without its dependence upon and bonding with its worldly institution and community. In the twenty-first century, the bond of Tibetan *tulkus*' charisma with this world is becoming ever more multifaceted. Its cross-regionalization and globalization marks a new era of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet, China, and beyond. While its soteriological effort continues to be materialized in both Tibetan and non-Tibetan social environments, the broader presence of *tulku* charisma is increasingly witnessed also in contexts concerning Sino-Tibetan relations, the geopolitics of the Tibet Question, transnational market economics, public discourses on religion and science, modernization and ecological health, and indigenous rights. These innumerable facets of Tibetan Buddhist connectivity in a global context clearly reveal themselves, in all their intensity and intricacy, within the popular realm of religion in the midst of China's development of its market economy.

Spiritualization of money and materialization of charisma

In the current studies of Tibetan Buddhism's global connectivity within the political domain of China, emphases are mostly placed on Tibetans as the victims of China's economic development in Tibetan regions, the exclusivity of which effectively marginalizes Tibetans (Fischer 2005). A decade ago, scholarly research on Tibetan Buddhist revivals rarely touched on the global connectedness of Tibetan Buddhism – as evidenced in Goldstein and Kapstein's edited anthology (Goldstein and Kapstein 1998). A decade later, Makley's *Violence of Liberation* (Makley 2008) extensively discusses the impact of economic globalization in the Labrung area. In her ethnographic accounts, the Tibetan Buddhist revitalization and current Sino-Tibetan relations are also caught up in China's market economy – and particularly in the consumer market of ethnic tourism. Although the local repercussions of Makley's work are at the center of her analysis, she nevertheless makes a note of local Tibetans' own wishes to be a part of global modernization, as to them "to be ethnic is to be left behind" (Makley 2008:7). According to Makley, Tibetan lay folks and Gelukpa monks in the Labrung area overtly prefer the Western style of modernization over the Chinese version, as they favor Western visitors as "preferred consumers of ethnic commodities" (ibid.:7). The ethnic dimension of the Geluk revitalization in the Labrung area is the focal point

of Makley's ethnographic narratives, and Tibetans remain localized as passive recipients of both Western and Chinese modernization. In Makley's interpretation, their passively participatory, resisting posture toward China's modernization program is reinforced.

Unlike what is taking place in Gelukpa-centered communities, Nyingmapa lamas do not overtly emphasize Tibetan ethnicity when they rebuild their ruined monasteries and when they are in contact with their Han Chinese adherents; instead, they highlight Buddhist soteriology. They are taking more initiative in China's market economy for the revitalization and globalization of Tibetan Buddhism. Since the onset of large-scale Nyingmapa revivals in the late 1980s, Tibetan lamas from Kham and Amdo have been cross-regionally on the move. They move between the highlands of Kham and Amdo and the lowlands of Han China, in both a physical and virtual sense. They physically travel to Han Chinese regions, offering teachings and raising alms. They also have a virtual presence in metropolitan centers of China, by means of the internet and print media. The virtual representations of their charismatic teachings, in turn, draw streams of Han Chinese pilgrims to Kham and Amdo. In these physical and virtual motions of Tibetan charismatic teachers, the market economy plays a mediating role in linking the Tibetan Buddhist revitalization with the Han Chinese population. To put it candidly, the linkage is money.

In this book, money is understood as possessing a dual nature – from Georg Simmel's sociological perspective, both "as a concrete and valued substance and, at the same time, as something that owes its significance to the complete dissolution of substance into motion and function" (Simmel 2004:176). In this respect, money is not purely the representation of economic value. It is seen as a unifying value and an agent of social relationships. Its function is facilitating exchanges not exclusively limited to the economic realm. Rather, it deeply and widely connects itself with the sentiments, social ethos, and collective psychologies of a given society. In fact, from a historical perspective, money has held a position rivaling ultimate values in relation to God, Buddhas, and other forms of divinity and the sacred throughout a vast diversity of human societies. Simmel has pointed out that while God unifies all diversities, contradictions, and estrangements of the world, money serves an almost identical function without being revered as being of divine content; however lacking in divinity, it does bring together different interests and shortens or dissolves the social distance between those who share similar and dissimilar aesthetic, moral, and economic values (ibid.:236–7). From Simmel's viewpoint, "Money in its psychological form, as the absolute means and thus as the unifying point of innumerable sequences of purposes, possesses a significant relationship to the notion of God – a relationship that only psychology … may disclose" (ibid.:236). The religiosity of money is visibly expressed in the physical forms of currency. Religious icons may not necessarily be printed on them, and yet indications of the highest morals and apotheosized historical figures are among the most frequent images found on paper and coin monies in the contemporary world. To name a few, such figures as George Washington, Queen Elizabeth I, Mao Zedong, and Mohandas K. Gandhi may be taken as representative of this phenomenon. The remark of the sixteenth-century German playwright

Hans Sachs, "Money is the secular God of the world" (ibid.:238), continues to exercise its bearing upon our experience and intellectual understanding of the social and psychological function of money in the twenty-first century.

Throughout the book I do not subject money to a class analysis, simplistically parsing a social group into the dispossessing and the dispossessed. The ultimately unifying economic value of money is assumed. It is seen as the most powerful and effectual string that lashes together every social member – the rich and the poor, the judges and the criminals, the religious and the atheistic, the charismatic and their nameless adherents. It creates passages between the subject and the object. When money brings together the subjectivity of the consumer and its desired object, it externalizes the inner activities of the consumer, i.e. his or her desires, moral, aesthetic, and religious perceptions, and ideals. What is exchanged, with money as the medium between the subject and the object, is not necessarily concerned with the proposed monetary value of the object. By taking Simmel's perspective, I see that the value of the object is not in the object itself, but resides in the mental space of the subject or the owner of money. The object represents, rather, the inherent value of the subject in an a priori manner. The function of money here is not limited to the acquisition of the monetary value of the object, but is mostly activated to externalize the internal values of the subject, be they material or spiritual. In this respect, money turns the shapeless into the shaped and the colorless into the colorful, and transforms the object into the subject or makes the object as the representation of the subjective contents of the money owner. In reversal, money also transfigures the subject into the object. Whatever subjective values (identified by the market) are monetarily profitable – and thus the material representations of these intangible values – are to be made, and distributed, and sold. This dual nature of money is also what Simmel calls money's "divisibility and unlimited convertibility" (ibid.:292). In other words, it both destroys and creates.

The revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism is intimately entwined with the dual nature of money in contemporary China. From Simmel's sociological and psychological viewpoint, Tibetan lamas are not merely embodiments of the Buddha's teachings, but have become objects of acquisition. On the one hand, they are subject to commercialization; on the other hand, their objectification reflects both the internal moral and spiritual values of Han Chinese as well as the social conditions of religion in contemporary China. In other words, these internal values of the Han Chinese and the external social conditions of religion are projected onto or infused into the external representations of charismatic Tibetan lamas. In this context, the activities of exchange between the subject and the object, or between the Han Chinese Buddhists and Tibetan lamas, are a process of representation in which money, either in its paper or electronic form, is at once complicating and speeding up the current Tibetan Buddhist revivals in China.

Whenever money is connected with religion, it is weighed on the scales of moral judgment. The presence of Tibetan Buddhism in the West has already given rise to what Chögyam Trungpa called "spiritual materialism," referring to the volitions and acts of harnessing material profit from Buddhist Dharma teaching activities (1973). The emergence of charlatan Dharma teachers and profit-minded alms-raising activities is an inevitable occurrence in Buddhist spiritual materialism. This

is not a distinctly Western religious phenomenon, as it certainly occurs elsewhere in the world; however, the dual split between the spiritual and the material is a distinct Western phenomenon. In both capitalist and socialist worldviews, seeking material abundance is morally and ideologically justified – and is often unbridled. Western transnational corporations and socialist modernization programs in China are ideologically different; however, the ways they harness both human and natural resources are identical. Both separate the material and the spiritual, and the mutually perceived superiority of the material is manifest enough in the current state of environment and sociopolitical issues.

In the Buddhist worldview, the spiritual and the material are not separated; instead, they mutually saturate each other and form such interdependency that the existence of one relies on that of the other. Wealth is inherently connected with leisure and freedom for one's Dharma practices. Tibetan tantric practices in the Nyingmapa tradition have numerous rituals and recitations to bring forth the leisure and wealth that are preconditions for the success of one's practice. Leisure (ཁོམ་པ། *khompa*) is understood against the backdrop of what is known in Buddhism as the "eight conditions of non-leisure" (མི་ཁོམ་པ་བརྒྱད། *mi-khompa-gyad*), referring to the realms of the hells, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the pleasure-only, the long-life heavens, the deaf and dumb, the sophists, and the temporal intervals without the presence of Buddha-dharma. Although the historical Buddha is long gone, his teachings are nevertheless present in many parts of the human realm. The first lesson of a tantric novice from a Tibetan Nyingma teacher often pertains to the rare chance of being (re)born as a human. Buddhas only come in human form; thus, it is one's fortune to be born as a human. However, most humans live a life with bondage to the social environment and financial conditions, and therefore have no or little leisure to receive and practise the teachings of the Buddha. In this respect, leisure is inherently a property of freedom and, as such, is intimately related to the external conditions of one's inner freedom concerning the materialization of one's spiritual volition. The word *rangdbang* (རང་དབང་།), or freedom, in Tibetan, literally means self-authority or self-power. Thus, freedom in a Tibetan Buddhist sense is realized when one possesses the capacity to choose one's spiritual path without external hindrances. Material wealth in this aspect of Buddhist practice is a necessity which clears one's external hindrances and thus functions as a primary means to secure leisure and freedom in this world.

In twenty-first-century China, money is the representation of wealth. In the highest echelon of its nouveaux riches, twenty-six of all Chinese businesses were listed among the Fortune 500 in 2008 (enorth.com 2008). According to Forbes, among the four hundred richest Chinese, the highest net worth is US$2,300 million at the age of 37, while the lowest net worth is US$101 million at the age of 41. The ages of these richest Chinese average in the early forties (sina.com). The youngest is 25 years old. Without exaggerating, the whole nation of China has caught money fever. In the lowest echelon of Chinese society, millions of rural migrant workers are on the move in search of the fulfillment of their money-dreams. They work in sweat shops and shoe factories, on construction sites, in the sex industry, and as housekeepers. Meanwhile, the headlines of popular websites as well as the cover pages of newspapers, magazines, and tabloids sold on urban

street corners often catch the eyes of netizens and pedestrians, who read therein about cases of corruption related to high-level Party officials whose communist moral puritanism has been eroded by their insatiable appetite for money. For them, as well, "the sky is the limit" in the exchange of their political power for wealth. Daily, following each other's routine greetings, friends and colleagues often begin to talk about their money issues. Money is becoming the second nature of this most populous nation on earth.

Tibetan Buddhism is not immune from this money-environment of China. Historically, monetary offerings from the Yuan and Qing courts were common; however, they were mostly channeled through the Chinese, Mongol, and Manchu courts to larger monastic establishments in Tibet. There were few or no large-scale, Chinese popular donations to Tibetan monasteries and lamas. In this sense, the Tibetan monastic system is currently being invaded by the forces of money from a market economy. Most Han Chinese who are converts of Tibetan Buddhism are not stereotypical Chinese Buddhists – old, rural, and less educated. On the contrary, they are from the middle and upper classes of China. They are either looking for alternative spiritual paths or theurgical ways to expand their wealth. Tibetan Buddhism seems to possess an efficacy for their spiritual and material advancement. In January 2001, Khenpo Sonam Darje, an original disciple of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, had an extensive dialogue on the modernization of Buddhism with Dharma Master Jiqun, then President of the Mingnan Buddhist Academy in Fujian Province (Sonam Darje 2002). The entire transcript of the dialogue later became a very popular Buddhist tract in Chinese, as it touches upon the topics of modern science, tantric sex, wealth, the impact of the Cultural Revolution on religion in China, and the Han Chinese perception of Tibetan Buddhism. In 2006, Li Lin, the CEO of an energy company and allegedly the youngest daughter of Li Peng, China's former premier, interviewed Dorzhi Rinpoche (རྡོར་ཞི་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།), a popular charismatic lama and prolific Buddhist author in China, about how to become a Buddhist. The interview notes were subsequently published in *Culture of Buddhism*, a Beijing-based, semi-academic magazine (Miaolin 2002). In 2007, Dorzhi Rinpoche lectured on Buddhism and social harmony in the auditorium of the School of Business Management at Zhongshan University in Guangdong Province. Most of his audience was comprised of the School's faculty members, MBA students, and successful entrepreneurs from other parts of the province (Zhang 2007). In March 2008, martial artist and movie star Li Lianjie (known as Jet Li by North Americans) paid homage to the 14th Dalai Lama. It was his second meeting with the most charismatic Tibetan lama on earth, since his initial conversion to Tibetan Buddhism at the turn of the twenty-first century. His multi-million-dollar One Foundation primarily serves his Buddhist-inspired charitable work.

The mobility of Tibetan lamas and their affluent Han Chinese patrons contribute to the entanglement of religious charisma and money. This is a "Chinese characteristic" imprinted upon the current Tibetan Buddhist revitalization in Kham and Amdo. Herein, money and the charisma of Tibetan lamas are both ends and means for one's spiritual yearnings and material desires. The materialization of charisma and the spiritualization of money are thus enmeshed. In this dialectic process, charisma and money are at once destroyers of existing modes of being

and creators of new inner and outer conditions of communities and individuals. Depending upon the volitions of the charismatic lamas and owners of money, new opportunities for leisure and freedom could be seized for either genuine Buddhist practice or the commodification of Tibetan Buddhism in China's market economy. Meanwhile, what charisma and money destroy and create is also reshaping the relationship between the Chinese state and religion – engendering alternative social space for private religious and spiritual expressions, and fostering an emergence of popular discourses and contentions on how the Chinese state has represented Tibet for the last half century.

The cross-regionality of the fieldwork

Positioning

My interest in Sino-Tibetan Buddhist relations began in the mid-1990s, when I was among a small group of graduate students and faculty members who met the Dalai Lama at the library of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Attending the public speech he delivered at UC Berkeley's Memorial Stadium, the crowd was truly multicultural. Standing next to the (now late) Chancellor Tien Chang-lin, the Dalai Lama remarked that it was critical for the Tibetans and the Chinese to recognize each other's humanity and to renew the Buddhist tie between these two important peoples of Asia. My personal attendance at this event led to my second Master's thesis concerning the contemporary Tibetan diaspora in North America. In my work with Tibetan immigrants and refugees from Kham and Amdo regions, I became quite aware of the nature of their triangular relationships with Americans and Chinese in the US. With their American friends, many of them conformed to the public, media-generated image of Tibetans as Buddhists and refugees. Those who received the atheistic education of modern China before coming to the West were re-embracing Tibetan Buddhism for both spiritual and practical purposes in their new living environment. Meanwhile, in their private space and leisure time, they shopped and dined in the Chinatowns of Oakland and San Francisco. Unlike their compatriots from Dharamsala, they maintained a dual cultural consciousness – meaning that they simultaneously distanced themselves from their Chineseness in public when necessary, and yet they retained personal friendships with their Chinese counterparts in private. This duality of public Tibetanness and private Sino-Tibetanness in North America is a correlation of their past living experience under the rule of the Chinese state and functions in response to their new host country's geopolitical position and popular opinion on what is termed the "Tibet Question."

Tibetan studies in the West and China are, needless to say, political. Tibetans are not the only ones affected by the politics of the Tibet Question. Scholars are pressured to take a politically-correct position. On both sides, the Tibet issue is moral and ideological. In China, scholars of Tibetan studies – whether they are Tibetans or non-Tibetans – are required to produce their scholarly works within the framework of the Chinese state. This mandates their recognition of Tibet as a part of China and their acceptance of modern Tibet, or New Tibet, as a product of

the Chinese state's liberation of common Tibetans from serfdom. As a US citizen working in a Chinese university which has the largest department of Tibetan studies in China, I am not subject to this state conformity; however, I am aware of the imminent threat to my career if I ever politicize my scholarly research in favor of any particular interest groups which are up against the Chinese state. With this political awareness, I retain my non-political positioning as much as possible. However, Tibetan cultural expressions of any form in the public space of China are often perceived as political statements. My host university generously assigned me a large office space and a gallery for the development and implementation of exchange activities involving US students. Among the artists' works exhibited in the gallery have been paintings by a diversity of members of the Yi, Dai, Mongolian, and Tibetan nationalities. My own personal fondness for Tibetan art was perceptible, however, in viewing the murals I commissioned particularly for my office. Eventually, after the March 2008 Lhasa uprisings, my host administrator politely suggested to me, "Dr Yu, your office is too Tibetan. Please make it multicultural, since this campus is representative of all ethnic groups in China." It is true that my host university has the most ethnically diverse student body in China. For the sake of this cultural reality, I took his suggestion. The current mural on my office wall is based on a Duanhuang cave painting, and is ethnically ambiguous. I then nicknamed my office "the cave," which I hoped might shelter my work from the politics of Tibetan studies.

In actuality, there is no place which can shelter scholarship from politics. Perhaps I can dodge political intimidation from one side, but certainly not from all sides. This "intimidation" is sometimes unconscious and unintentional. Last semester I had an American student who majored in Tibetan Buddhist studies at a reputable university known especially for its Tibetan studies program. It was her first time meeting Tibetans in China. I recognized her excitement and did my best to support her personal and academic interest in Tibetan people and culture. Tibetan students like to frequent my "cave" to borrow books and discuss their readings. She took the opportunity to make Tibetan friends and, in the meantime, manifested her discomfort when I was with my Tibetan friends. She often verbally reminded them of my being a Chinese, or interrupted our conversations in an irritated manner. Within a short time, the students began to tell me that she was "cautioning" them about my being a Chinese. It was most unfortunate that she came to my exchange program with this pre-existing view on the Sino-Tibetan relation which presumed the total separation and non-relatedness between people on the ground level. What I saw from her social behavior with Tibetans in China was that she was possessive of Tibet. This was not her personal issue, but rather a cultural phenomenon in the Western academic environment in which one is similarly pressured to take a side.

In fact, she was not the only Westerner who was critical or uncomfortable with my being a Chinese in the field of Tibet-related research. An English instructor on campus had similar issues. Having lived in Golok and having taught English there for a few years prior to coming to the university, his experiences motivated his creation of an English corner specifically for Tibetan students on campus. I was invited to help his Tibetan students practise English, but, like the American

student, he was not comfortable when Tibetan students were friendly with me. Once, when his weekend English session ended, a Tibetan graduate student asked me to proofread his English translation of a short description of a tourist site in Amdo. As we sat down in the campus café, the English instructor followed, asking us what we were doing and bearing an expression of suspicion on his face. We told him what we were going to do and invited him to join us, but he said he had other engagements. An hour later when we walked out of the café, he was standing outside and insisted on walking the Tibetan student back to his dorm. The next day, the Tibetan student told me that the instructor had wanted to find out what "exactly" we had done in the café. Whether or not it was intentional, the instructor's manner put him in a position of policing the "politico-racial line" between Tibetans and Chinese.

I had no choice to be born as a Chinese, but had the choice to become an American. Having lived in the US for over twenty years, I see myself as an Asian-American; however, the personal choice of one's identity is not always congruent with one's externally perceived or defined identity. The force of externally ascribed ethnic, cultural, and political identity is often depressingly conforming and uncompromising. In the field of Tibetan studies in the West, there are scholars such as Melvyn Goldstein and Gray Tuttle who claim a politically neutral position in their works and who obviously do not wish to identify themselves with any political faction; however, their research findings are unavoidably political in nature. In my class discussions on contemporary Tibet issues, my North American students appear less critical of these scholars' subjectivities and personal backgrounds than mine. This is a recognized pattern of my students when we have Tibet-related conversations. This pattern, admittedly, is not random but manifests how impossible it is to exclude personal backgrounds of scholars from the politics of contemporary Sino-Tibetan relations, on the ground level. In this book I do not wish to claim a totally objective position. Neither do I take a position with a particular political faction; however, I do position myself as a social scientist engaging in scholarly analyses of politics of religion, ethnic identity, and the state ideology in relation with the revitalizations and growth of Tibetan Buddhism among both Tibetan and non-Tibetan populations in contemporary China.

Conceiving the field

An anthropological field in the twenty-first century is no longer a geographically isolated location where everything and everyone is sedentary and land-locked. "Everyone's on the move," remarks James Clifford (1997:2). Of course, human beings have always been on the move; however, the magnitude and intensity of modern movement is unprecedented in regards to channels of migration, exile, war, urbanization, transnational commerce, and the electronic mediation of human ideas through the internet. Geographically, many Tibetan Buddhist communities where I have lived or visited are located in "remote" mountainous regions of Kham and Amdo. Their remoteness, in essence, is a perception of those of us who situate our livelihoods in cosmopolitan centers where time and space are mostly defined by the schedules and locations of our work and by the sophisticated

infrastructures of transportation and communication. In the consciousness of cosmopolitan-minded and -habituated individuals, non-cosmopolitan regions of the world like Kham and Amdo appear "remote." This perception is not so much about geographic distance as it is about self-centered conceptions of time and space with the flavor of so-called modernity. If there were a non-stop flight between San Francisco and Lhasa, it would take less than eighteen hours to reach one's destination; in the context of globalization, subjective perceptions of "remoteness" are due for reevaluation. Bearing in mind these dynamics and limitations of cosmopolitan life, I reject the old tendency of anthropology to treat the field as an Other, as if it is completely outside of the institutional and cultural bounds of anthropology, as if this Other could only be "raw," "wild," "different," and finally, "data." These labels are fables without much in the way of lessons to learn other than those of gross ignorance and arrogance. The fable of the field as an Other continues to haunt the discipline of anthropology and drains the intellectual energy of many fine anthropologists, as shown in Gupta and Ferguson's *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). The perception of the remoteness of the field blocks us from seeing and experiencing different faces of humanity.

With that said, Kham and Amdo were the primary Tibetan locations of my fieldwork; however, I was also on the move, traveling to different communities of Kham, Amdo, and beyond. I followed Tibetan lamas into Han Chinese regions, followed the disseminations of various representations of Tibetan Buddhism beyond their Tibetan regions of origin, and lodged in Chinese cities to help both Tibetans and Han Chinese edit their translations for publication while also organizing descriptive online materials as part of my participatory research activities. Meanwhile, I also interacted with Chinese and Tibetan scholars in urban China. In this style of research, I transgressed the "remoteness" of the field on multiple occasions – as I moved in and out of different social and national communities, as I ascended into the high altitudes of Tibetan landscapes and descended into the lowlands of Han Chinese regions, and as I reflectively traversed my own consciousness in attempts to clarify my own conceptions of religion, civilization, politics, and humanity, all while alone on foot, horseback, bus, train, and airplane. In many ways, my fieldwork was a non-traditional approach to a typology of anthropological research in which one would typically stay in a fixed locality for an extended period of time, in a stationary manner comparable to that found in the works of Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard. My fieldwork could instead be characterized as cross-regional and cross-institutional; I traveled with Tibetans and Han Chinese pilgrims between Han and Tibetan regions, and I attended various Buddhist rituals in Tibetan monasteries while also participating in Tibetan studies conferences in Chinese academic institutions.

Nyingmapa communities in Kham and Amdo

The form of tantric Buddhism that Nyingmapa has preserved, as compared with other Tibetan Buddhist traditions, has the longest history. "Nyingma" (རྙིང་མ།) means old or ancient, and "pa" (པ།) means school or sect. Although the name of

this ancient sect of Tibetan Buddhism was given in the eleventh century when *sarma* (གསར་མ།) or the New Schools, Sakyapa (ས་སྐྱ་པ།), Kagyupa (བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པ།), and Kadampa/Gelukpa were established (Reginald A. Ray 2002:34–5), its practices are commonly identified by scholars and prominent Nyingma lamas as the oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism (Anne Klein 1985:4; Damodar Jnawali 2007:32). Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, a renowned Nyingma teacher, states, "The Nyingma is the oldest, mother School, of Tibetan Buddhism" (Tulku Thondup 1977:14). Padmasambhava, the Indian tantric Buddhist master who journeyed to Tibet in the eighth century, is regarded as the founder of the Nyingmapa. All other branches of Tibetan Buddhism began their formative stage after the eleventh century. In this respect, the Nyingmapa is at least 300 years older than its contemporary counterparts, such as the Gelukpa, Sakyapa, and Kagyupa. Prior to the eleventh century, the Nyingmapa was not monastery-based but rather family- and village-based, with most of its teachings involving esoteric practices known as tantrism. Transmissions of tantric teachings were often conducted in a secretive manner, sometimes on a one-to-one basis only between the teacher and the chosen disciple. Nyingmapa practitioners were not of visible institutional establishment until the eleventh century, when "The Three of the the Zur Clan" (ཟུར་གསུམ། zur-gsum) began to systematically articulate Nyingmapa's doctrines and to construct monasteries. "The Three of the Zur Clan" refers to three individuals of Zur family in three generations. They are Zurpoche Sakyajongni (ཟུར་པོ་ཆེ་ཤཱཀྱ་འབྱུང་གནས། 1002–1062), Zurchung Sakyashesrab Krakspa (ཟུར་ཆུང་ཤེས་རབ་གྲགས་པ།1014–1074), and Drophurpa Sakyasengke (སྒྲོ་ཕུར་པ་ཤཱཀྱ་སེང་གེ།1074–1134). All three were engaged not only in monastic education but also in healing. Their popularity was not so much with the Tibetan upper class but mostly with commoners (Wang 1991:92).

Throughout the history of Tibetan Buddhism, the Nyingmapa had a minimum of political entanglements with temporal Tibetan politics. The branch of Tibetan Buddhism that the Dalai Lama represents, Gelukpa, has been the core of Tibetan theocratic polity centered in Lhasa. This type of governance is called in the Tibetan language *chösinyitrel* (ཆོས་སྲིད་ཟུང་འབྲེལ།) meaning the conjoinment of religion and political affairs (Goldstein 1991:2). Besides the prominence of its religious practices, Gelukpa has also had a long history of political dominance in Tibet beginning from the sixteenth century when Sonam Gyatso, then the head of Gelukpa, sought alliance with Altan Khan, the de facto Mongol king. Altan Khan conferred the title of Dalai Lama on him. This alliance strengthened Gelukpa's religious influence and political dominance in Tibet (Chen Qingying 2006:40). In comparison with the Gelukpa, the Nyingmapa has hardly had any substantial political participation in the ruling of historical Tibet. Although it is the oldest among all branches of Tibetan Buddhism, it has remained on both the political and geographical margins. Although the Nyingmapa did develop a monastic presence, most of its practitioners were not in central Tibet, but spread out on the geographic margins of the historical Tibetan empire, in the regions of Kham, Golok, and eastern Amdo. Besides its monastic practitioners, there are also three distinct classifications of Nyingma practitioners – *ngakpa*/*ngakma* (སྔགས་པ། སྔགས་མ།) or those who are holders of secret mantras, *ghama* (བཀའ་མ།) or those who hold the Buddha's teachings through oral transmission, and *terma* (གཏེར་མ།) or those who

reveal hidden treasures of the past Buddhist saints. At times individuals may be found to embody more than one of these types. For instance, the Late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok was both a *terma* and *ghama*. These three types of practitioners are not necessarily monastery-based, especially *ngakpa/ngakma* which will be addressed in Chapter 3. This continues to be the case in the contemporary revival of Tibetan Buddhism in the regions of Kham and Golok in Amdo.

Since the 1990s, Nyingma communities in Kham and Amdo have become popular pilgrimage destinations for a broadening stream of Han Chinese Buddhists. Unlike many Tibetans who circumambulate sacred mountains as acts of pilgrimage, Han Chinese Buddhists head straight to pre-selected monasteries. It is not that they plan to see the monasteries, but rather their abbots or particular *tulkus* – whom they heard about from veteran pilgrim friends, or whom they read about in online biographies and teachings in Chinese, or whom they met at tantric rituals hosted in private homes in urban China. In Kham, two constellations of pilgrimage sites especially attract Han Chinese and Westerners. Each is centered upon a particular charismatic *tulku*. The late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy in Sertar, bordering Golok, is the center of one constellation. As many of his initial disciples became prominent tantric teachers, their home monasteries are also becoming frequent pilgrimage sites in northern Kham and Golok. Achu Lama (ཨ་ཕྲུ་བླ་མ།), another charismatic *tulku*, represents the other constellation of pilgrimage sites in western Kham. Since the Chinese suppression of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy at the turn of this century, many of his monks and nuns took refuge in Achu Lama's Yachin Monastery (ཡ་ཆེན་དགོན་པ།). As this monastery is within close distance of the Gathok Monastery (ཀཿཐོག་དགོན་པ།), a primary historical source of Nyingma teachings, Yachin and related branches in the area are common sites for non-Tibetan pilgrims.

Bus rides from Xining to Nyingma communities in Golok and other parts of Qinghai are fairly pleasant, as Qinghai Province has a relatively better transportation system and road conditions than Sichuan Province. The bus routes from Sichuan to Kham start in Chengdu. Chengdu is an urban portal of the Tibetan Buddhist revival in China; in the vicinity of Wuhou Temple, Minzu Street is the place where Tibetans and Han Chinese Buddhists congregate and where Tibetan craft shops and Buddhist stores contribute to the bustling urban scene. It is a marketplace for both Buddhist texts and ritual paraphernalia, and for the circulation of pilgrimage-related information. Highways 317 and 318 are the primary routes leading urban pilgrims into Kham from Chengdu. Both highways were built in the 1950s, sending the PRC's administrative and military personnel into Lhasa. Since the 1990s, they have been under reconstruction many times. It is said that because corrupt officials usurped considerable amounts from the state construction funds, new roads were often built in poor quality. Every two years these roads need an overhaul. Highway 317 briefly cuts into the Aba Tibetan-Qiang Autonomous Prefecture and makes its turn toward the west into Kham when it reaches Wenchuan, the most populous town of predominantly Qiang ethnicity. Most Sertar-bound pilgrims take this highway. After an approximately twenty-two hour overnight bus ride, passengers arrive in Sertar – where immense rolling mountains and grasslands make any human presence insignificant. The

blue sky and clean air instantly liberate one's lungs and vision from the human stench and plastic trash on the bus. Those pilgrims heading to Achu Lama's Yachin Monastery take Highway 318, the highway most frequently used by both civilians and military convoys, to Ganzi Township for transfer. In the late 1990s and at the turn of this century, it would have taken a longer time to reach Yachin and other Gathok branch monasteries, as there were no direct buses linking Ganzi Township to the Yachin area. Riding on horseback into the area was one of the few means of transportation available; news of bandits robbing pilgrims en route was common. Pilgrims with more resources now often come with their rented or owned vehicles. These urbanites venture out of their modern discontents seeking spiritual treasures from Tibetans – yet the traffic goes in both directions. While some might choose to stay, many others want to bring back home not only Tibetan tantric teachings, but also Tibetan teachers.

What the non-Tibetan pilgrims are searching for from Nyingma teachers is known in the West as the Great Perfection – or *dzogchen* (རྫོགས་ཆེན།), in Tibetan. *Dzogchen* is an abbreviation for *dzogpa chenpo* (རྫོགས་པ་ཆེན་པོ།). *Chenpo* means "large," "great," or "immense." *Dzogpa* is both a verb and a noun. As a verb, it means "to complete," "to end," and "to accomplish with all necessary conditions needed." As a noun, it means "end" or "fullness." In the Nyingmapa tradition, *dzogchen* specifically refers to a tantric Buddhist practice that is traced back to Padmasambhava. It is commonly understood as the primordial or natural state of sentience which is pristine and without worldly contaminants. It is the state in which one sees one's Buddha nature and enlightened being. In practice, *dzogchen* signifies a spiritual process in which one does not depart from the present condition to a future state of enlightenment; instead, one returns to the original state of being. It is a process of homecoming, and yet, neither does this "home" exist in the past tense. Rather, it is omnipresent in all three temporal frames – the past, the present, and the future. This process of spiritual homecoming involves the cultivation of both inner and outer conditions through which the primordial state of enlightenment reveals itself.

Currently, *dzogchen* is a widely spread tantric practice in the West and in urban China. The credibility of its popularity has much to do with its practitioners' perceived and/or experienced self-empowerment and theurgical efficacy in terms of healing and higher mental awareness. Most importantly, its popularity lies in the practical fact that the practitioner does not have to leave home becoming a monk or a nun; it can be practised at one's home with guidance from a teacher of one's choice. Unlike some monastic-based Mahayana traditions which tend to have a Buddhist version of "puritanism" toward sexuality and material possessions, *dzogchen* practice turns actual or perceived hindrances into favorable conditions for one's spiritual maturity and enlightenment. Commonly regarded as a spiritual fast lane, it is a lay-friendly Buddhist path with step-by-step instructions. The process is parsed into two stages, the preliminary (སྔོན་འགྲོ *ngondzo*) and the core (ནང་འགྲོ *nangdzo*). The preliminary stage particularly requires much time from the novice. It consists of four outer preliminaries and five inner preliminaries. The outer preliminaries pertain to one's rational understanding of why one needs to practise the Buddha's teachings, and entail the contemplation of four aspects of

human existence – namely, the rarity of being born as a human, the impermanence of life, the agonies in the cycle of birth and death, and the truthfulness of cause and effect. Then involving a great deal of somatic practice, the inner preliminaries consist of ritual acts pertaining to the taking of refuge in Buddha-dharma, the making of bodhisattva vows, the cleansing of spiritual hindrances, the accumulation of resources, and the practice of guru-yoga. Each of these five preliminaries requires 100,000 mantra-recitations, mandala offerings, or full prostrations. It is common for a *dzogchen* practitioner to break into a sweat while performing the devotional practices two or three times a day.

The external condition that guarantees the success of the preliminary practice is time. Ideally, according to many Nyingma lamas' prescriptions, the practitioner needs four to eight hours a day. Urbanites who have received such instructions from their Tibetan masters most likely have full-time jobs; thus, the most rigorous practitioner would devote four or five hours a day by getting up early and going to bed late. They also spend their vacation time making pilgrimage trips to visit their teachers in Tibetan regions. Among Han Chinese *dzogchen* practitioners, many have resigned from their jobs and some have relocated themselves to where their Tibetan teachers live. The majority continue to hang on to their urban jobs while actively searching for ways and means to shorten the distance between their Tibetan lamas and themselves, as well as that between leisure and their daily working schedules. Both real and virtual pilgrimage trails are linking Tibetan Nyingma communities and Han Chinese adherents of tantrism.

Chapter overview

This current chapter lays out the backdrop of Tibetan Buddhist revivals in Kham and Amdo, as well as that of their entwinement with Han Chinese Buddhists and China's market economy. It highlights the interpretive schemas that I wish to adopt in developing an understanding of how religious charisma, money, and Buddhist enlightenment are currently enmeshed by close contact between Tibetan Buddhism and contemporary Chinese society. Throughout the eight chapters of this book, many individuals appear in my narratives. Under the circumstances in which the Chinese state treats the religious affairs of its citizens and in consideration of its possessive nature in dealing with Tibet and Tibetans, the names of many of these individuals are altered so as to avoid potential political repercussions; others are unchanged based on individual consent.

My accounts and theoretical interpretations in Chapter 2 are concentrated on Tibetan lamas in their home environments. By focusing on the charisma of *tulkus* in its genuine state, I argue that *tulkus* play the central role in the revivals of Nyingmapa in Kham and Amdo. The collective function of an individual *tulku* is not merely personality-based. Rather, and most importantly, *tulkus* are a religio-cultural institution of Tibet – sanctioned by both monastic institutions and Buddhist philosophical notions of bodhisattva and rebirth. By comparing it with the overt political orientation of the Gelukpa revitalization, I also argue that Nyingmapa's soteriological rather than overt political emphasis has led to the current Tibetan cultural revitalization paralleling the religious revitalization. In

other words, Nyingmapa revivals did not start out as political projects; however, they have yielded political fruitions which have been witnessed and noted in many scholars' observations as Tibetan cultural revitalization. The soteriological acts of Nyingma lamas are those which have successfully called forth the Tibetan cultural renaissance in their home regions. The overlapping of Tibetan religion and culture is a given phenomenon; however, the fine line between them is that religion has its own teleology and thus extends beyond cultural bounds. This is a common feature of all world religions, including Tibetan Buddhism. Throughout Chapter 2, with the case of Nyingmapa in Kham and Amdo I attempt to articulate that many currently active Nyingma lamas are responsible for engendering both the inner revolution of their adherents in the spiritual sense and an outer cultural revitalization in the collective sense. On the theoretical level, Chapter 2 argues against Weber's typology of charisma exclusively as a personal quality that is subject to routinization and demise. In the Tibetan context, the reproduction of this type of genuine Buddhist charisma is positively sanctioned by monastic institutions, and is transmissible to those who wish to acquire it.

Chapter 3 connects the genuine charisma of *tulkus* with its physical environment, which I call the "charismatic landscape." Herewith I suggest that the uniqueness of religious charisma in the Nyingmapa case lies in the cultural-ecological fact that *tulkus*, as sacred content of Tibetan Buddhism, are not always human-centered. In many instances they are eco-centered, meaning that the physical locations of their communities were intentionally chosen as marked sacred sites. The marking of the natural landscape and especially mountains as sacred sites, I find, is not only in commemoration of past saints who did their solitary cave meditations in such locales. More critically, the honoring of marked places as sacred sites, in my observation, is patterned on the manner in which the family of sacred Tibetan mountains has extended itself from Central Tibet to Kham and Amdo. *Srid pa chags pa'i lha dge* (སྲིད་པ་ཆགས་པའི་ལྷ་དགུ), or the Nine Sacred/Spirit Mountain Ranges of Tibet, geologically and geomantically tie all Tibetan regions together. The names of all nine mountain ranges are names of gods who belong to the same family. Ode Gonggyal (འོ་དེ་གུང་རྒྱལ།), in Central Tibet, is the father of all other eight mountain gods. The order of his reproduction from the oldest son to the youngest son starts from Central Tibet and spatially extends out into Kham and Amdo. In each of the Nine Mountain Ranges, there are human settlements both lay and monastic which cluster together. In this chapter, I attempt to narrate and interpret how *gnas ri* (གནས་རི། sacred mountain) and *bla-ri* (བླ་རི། spirit/soul mountain) are the key charismatic eco-religio-determinants in Tibetans' formation of both lay and monastic communities. In the eco-communal sense, the purpose of connecting *tulkus* with the eco-religious landscape of Tibet is to continue to evidence the critical religious and spiritual role of *tulkus* in revitalizing Tibetan cultural identity. Meanwhile, in Chapter 3 I also lay the foundation upon which my subsequent chapters offer explications on why and how non-Tibetans, especially those from urban China and the West, are drawn to Tibet as one of the few spiritually and ecologically pristine places remaining in the world. I then explore the manner in which the pristine natures (both real and imagined) of charismatic lamas and Tibetan landscapes are simultaneously becoming alternative religio-spiritual

aspirations and destinations of urban Han Chinese, increasingly subject to crude commercialization within the market economy of China.

Chapter 4 is concerned with popular imaginations of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism among Han Chinese pilgrims and Tibet enthusiasts. It narrates how life histories of *tulkus* are written and represented as sacred biographies with the joint effort of Tibetan lamas and their Chinese disciples. *Tulkus* represented in these sacred biographies in cyberspace and Buddhist tracts appear to be spiritual virtuosos. The archetypal style of representing *tulkus* contributes to Chinese Buddhists' pre-pilgrimage imagination of Tibet and Tibetan tantric masters as a pristine earthly paradise with saints abounding in magic power. In this chapter I argue that this preconditioned imagination produces two implications for the pilgrim. At the outset it indeed motivates the pilgrim to journey to *tulkus*' home communities; however, it also displaces the mindscape of the pilgrim from the landscape of Tibet as the preconceived imagination is devoid of actual topographic, climatic, and cultural realities of *tulkus*' home territories. In other words, the spiritual use of *tulkus*' sacred biographies does not necessarily prepare the pilgrim for the territorial passages to *tulkus*' communities. The second point that I wish to articulate is that the *communitas* of Chinese pilgrims is not what Victor Turner referred to as the horizontal comradeship which is devoid of the pilgrim's social identity; instead, it mostly pertains to the vertical bonding of the pilgrims and their chosen *tulku* and his or her lineage-based teachings. Moreover, the vertical master–disciple bonding does not necessarily produce a horizontal bonding between pilgrims. Through my ethnographic cases of the discordance between the disciples' vertical dependency on the master and their horizontal relation with each other, I attempt to demonstrate that *communitas* is a liminal time-space but is not free from personal cultural-psychological behaviors that are induced by social happenings in contemporary China, i.e. the emergence of virtual Tibetan Buddhism and ongoing political marginalization of religions in Chinese society.

Tibetan Buddhism, as either actual or imagined, has become a fashionable choice among religious and spiritual seekers in urban China. It particularly attracts those who have a higher income and social mobility, including media professionals, artists, filmmakers, entrepreneurs, mid- and high-level administrators, corporate managers, university professors, and Party members. Chapter 5 examines both the creative and destructive role of money as a form of Buddhist alms and as a primary means of materializing the public presence of Tibetan Buddhism in China. While contextualizing the entanglement of charismatic Tibetan lamas and money with the economic growth of China, I argue that China's globally linked market economy is not merely an economic system, but is also a spontaneous order of things in which the idea and practice of religious freedom are facilitated by the flow of cash in the secular realm. I focus on the case of Buddhist uses of the internet to elucidate the complex relationship between Han Chinese Buddhists, cyber-representations of Tibetan lamas, and the transformative forces of the market. I intend to point out that China's market economy inadvertently engenders an alternative social space for an imagined community of Chinese Tibetan Buddhists, but that this, in the meantime, turns Tibetan Buddhism into

an object of consumption. In this chapter, money is seen as the unifying medium of social relations which is reshaping traditional practices of Tibetan Buddhism.

Following on currently active Tibetan lamas' public criticism regarding the commercialization of Tibetan Buddhism in China, Chapter 6 explores the way in which Tibetan lamas utilize modern media (such as the internet, videos, and print sources) to actively identify the destructive force of China's socialism towards religion in the past in general – and towards Tibetan Buddhism in particular. As more and more Tibetan *tulkus* and lamas have learned to work within the political system of China, they openly engage in public discourses concerning the atheistic representation of religion. Atheistic alignment of religion has been used as a political instrument of thought control since the founding of the People's Republic of China and even now in the early twenty-first century; this reality has contributed to the current spiritual crisis that many Chinese Buddhists have identified within their own culture. This chapter examines how Tibetan teachers and their Han Chinese disciples respond to the impact of the Chinese state's representation of religion, and how they attempt to reclaim the social legitimacy of religion. My primary argument in this chapter is that the process of Tibetan Buddhist revitalization, in addition to manifesting the physical reconstruction of destroyed monasteries, must also manifest an inner restoration in which the abuses and the wrongs committed by perpetrators need to be publicly acknowledged and denounced.

Chapter 7 discusses how urban Tibetans who live and work in cosmopolitan centers such as Beijing, Chengdu, and Lanzhou construct their own version of virtual Tibet – for the purpose of reclaiming their traditional past as a positive contribution to humankind, by emphasizing Buddhism as the basis of Tibetan civilization. I treat Tibetans' virtual Tibet as a part of China's public space; it is situated in the regulatory framework of the Chinese state, and connects itself with the greater Chinese cyberspace by using Chinese language and attracting advertisements from major Chinese Web conglomerates such as sina.com, sohu.com, and baidu.com. Upon this backdrop, I cast three arguments. First, the public space of/for Tibetans in China has not been neutral as some scholars suggest; instead, it has been neutralized by and dominated with Chinese state ideology. However, this ongoing state domination is facing contestation from urban Tibetans – albeit in an indirect fashion. Second, Tibetan Buddhism in urban Tibetans' public space is more an instrument of ethnic nationalism than a practised religion. Its instrumentality is geared toward fulfilling two intertwined purposes: imbuing the traditional Tibetan past with sacred character, and destigmatizing the traditional Tibetan culture which has been defined as "backward" and "oppressive" by the Chinese state. In this sense, educating the Chinese public through the virtual Tibet is a primary objective of urban Tibetans. Lastly, in this chapter I posit that contemporary Tibetan ethnic nationalism is emotive in nature, as modern Tibetan scholars and writers take a primordial turn to re-embrace Tibetan Buddhism in senses both historical and mythical.

Chapter 8, as the ending of the book, reinforces my argument that in addition to Tibetan lamas' roles in their local communities, the forces of globalization have been the main cause of recent Tibetan Buddhist revivals. Globalization in this chapter is not limited to the economic realm; it encompasses also the availability of

local human ideas in securing global well-being, and reciprocally embraces global concern for local issues of social justice, human rights, and cultural heritage. The global exchange of local ideas is no longer limited to the level of different nation-states, but is now a matter of fact between individuals from different parts of the world who have never met each other. In the global scheme of things, Western Buddhists are entitled to take credit for the growing number of Han Chinese who have embraced Tibetan Buddhism. Paralleling Tibetan religious revivals since the 1980s, many Buddhist texts authored by Western Buddhists and Tibetan teachers outside of Tibet have been translated into Chinese and are sold in China. Pema Chodron's *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness* (1993) and *When Things Fall Apart* (2002), Sogyal Rinpoche's *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (2002), and W.Y. Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1927) are among the titles that can be found in the Chinese book market. VCD and DVD copies of documentaries about the Dalai Lama from abroad are commonly viewed by Tibetan monks and nuns.

With all things considered in the complexity of Tibetan Buddhist revitalizations, my ending point is that Tibetan Buddhism in both traditional and modern forms has initiated its own version of New Age spirituality, except that it does not limit itself to the Western cultural domain but is also taking place in China and elsewhere. I characterize it as an ecospirituality since contemporary Tibetan Buddhism is clearly socially and environmentally engaged, as well as earth-inspired. It shares commonality with the ongoing planetary concern of global environment and the preservation of indigenous habitat and ecological practices. What is unique in the ecospirituality of Tibetan Buddhism is the "blood relation" between humans, land, and local spirits/deities as discussed in Chapter 3. This blood relation, in many ways, bears a function similar to Australian Aborigines' songlines or dream tracks, in which mythical-historical memories are locally sustained while its ecological values are being globally appreciated and referenced for building sustainable communities around the world.

2 *Tulkus*, genuine charisma, and its transmissible interiority in Kham and Amdo

On a bright summer day in Golok in 2003, a group of Chinese pilgrims from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China slowly walked into a lone house on a vast rolling grassland that stretched into the horizon. It was their pilgrimage to three-year-old Hwaldan Tashi (དཔལ་ལྡན་བཀྲ་ཤིས།), the second Siddhe Rinpoche (སིདྡྷི་བླ་མ།) of the Dudjom (བདུད་འཇོམས།) lineage. He had recently been enthroned as the second *tulku* (སྤྲུལ་སྐུ།), or reincarnation, of Siddhe Lama, a charismatic tantric teacher in Golok who had passed away in 2001. While Hwaldan Tashi was playing in the arms of an elder monk, the pilgrims gradually filled the small mud hut. Each of them walked up to Hwaldan Tashi to receive his blessing. The third pilgrim in line, upon approaching the young Siddhe Lama, began to weep. It was obviously a contagious moment because by the time Hwaldan Tashi laid his small hand on the pilgrim's head, the house was filled with weeping and sobbing.

Six hundred miles away and over a year later in western Kham, there came the first day of the *dzogchen* (རྫོགས་ཆེན། Great Perfection) initiation ceremony performed by Sangye Tsering Rinpoche (སངས་རྒྱས་ཚེ་རིང་།), a tantric lama of the Nyingmapa Kathog (ཀཿཐོག།) lineage. About ninety Chinese pilgrims were ushered into the front rows of the Dharma Hall. The prelude of the initiation ceremony began with his visualization request to everyone present:

> … every sentient being in this world was our mother more than once in the past, and will be our mother again in the future. Each of us has died and has been reborn countless times … Let us then visualize the abundance of our mothers' love, tears, and wrongful deeds committed for the sake of raising us. If we begin to recount our mothers' love for us, we will never be able to finish; if we pour together the tears our mothers shed for us, they will flood the lands of the earth; if we count wrongful deeds our mothers committed for the sake of raising us, we will never be able to wash away our guilt and shame with water. If we pile up the dead bodies of our mothers in the past, the pile will reach the limit of the sky …

The sounds of weeping frequently interrupted the translation by Gyatso Lama, a *khenpo* at Smyoshol Monastery (སྨྱོ་ཤུལ་དགོན་པ།). Men and women were wiping their tears and blowing their noses.

A year later in Badzong (འབའ་རྫོང་།), currently in Tongde County of Qinghai Province, three busloads of Chinese pilgrims had received *sherab* (ཤེས་རབ། wisdom) and *tse dabang* (ཚེ་དབང་། longevity) empowerments from Konchok Renchen Rinpoche (དཀོན་མཆོག་རིན་ཆེན།) at Shingkhri Monastery (ཤིང་ཁྲི་དགོན་པ།). Afterward, they circumambulated him, weeping. The collective weeping lasted over an hour and a half. Eventually the circumambulation ceased but the crowd of pilgrims then sat around Konchok Renchen Rinpoche with their eyes welling up. Lungdok Rinpoche (ལུང་རྟོགས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།), Konchok Renchen Rinpoche's disciple who had brought the Chinese pilgrims to Badzong, finally persuaded the crowd to let his eighty-four-year-old master have a rest.

Two years later, in 2007, fifteen Chinese pilgrims, mostly women, joined Khandrol (མཁའ་འགྲོ Dakini) Lhajam (ལྷ་ལྕམ།), a reincarnation of Khandrol Wisa (དབུས་བཟའ་མཁའ་འགྲོ།) of the Dudjom lineage, in her solitary cabin in Dzorge (མཛོད་དགེ།), Sichuan Province, for a *phowa* (འཕོ་བ།) ritual, known as a technique for the transference of consciousness at the time of death. Teachings of *phowa* are imparted by one's lama. In most instances, these teachings are practised by the living for the purpose of being able to recall the lama's instructions at the time of death so that one's consciousness can pass to the blissful realm of the Buddhas. Unlike male *tulkus* in the Nyingma tradition, Khandrol Lhajam sang forth many critical parts of the ritual text. The pilgrims sang along, with a pre-distributed translation and transliteration of the ritual text. Khandrol Lhajam's singing and recitation brought forth the weeping of the *phowa* participants. Two-thirds of the way through the ritual, many weeping pilgrims entered altered states of consciousness, swooning into a faint.

Emotional expressions of religious devotees are common, especially in a charismatic context. In her study of Venerable Zhengyan, the most charismatic nun in Taiwan, Julia Huang points out, "Emotion, as embodied in nonverbal uncontrolled crying, constitutes a commitment to religious charisma" (Huang 2003:74). Huang's assessment is also pertinent to the current context of Nyingmapa *tulkus*' interaction with their Han Chinese disciples; however, as in many other studies of charisma, the understanding of the charismatic appeal of Venerable Zhengyan takes place in the Weberian framework; thus, her religious charisma is discerned as a personality phenomenon. In this chapter I wish to discuss the genuine religious charisma of Nyingma *tulkus* not solely as a matter of personality, but also as a collective religio-spiritual phenomenon in Tibet. By "collective," I mean the representative quality of the charismatic; in other words, the charismatic is a link between pilgrims and the religious institution he or she represents. "Institution," here, is understood in the broadest sense to include both cultural practices as well as formally structured organizations such as monasteries. In this chapter, I address three interlaced facets of religious charisma in the Tibetan Nyingma context.

First, the genuine religious charisma of a *tulku* is an embodiment of the collective teaching effort found in Tibetan Buddhism. A *tulku*'s personal qualities may contribute to the magnitude of his charismatic appeal; however, they are not the primary sources of his charisma. Instead, the inheritable lineage of specific tantric teachings is the charismatic engine that attracts a crowd. This lineage-based charisma is often externalized through the charismatic's teachings and

the material manifestation of his practices. Second, many of the tantric teachings and practices in Nyingmapa are essentially antinomian in nature, expressed in prominent Nyingma masters' exegeses of Buddhist enlightenment. Although the teachings advocate transcending and transgressing boundaries of all sorts, charismatic *tulku*s and their lineages are nevertheless institutionalized in the context of Tibetan monasticism. This seems to contradict the antinomian posture in Nyingma tantrism; however, the historical fact is that the genuine charisma based on clear tantric lineages is positively sanctioned for its reproduction by both monastic and lay institutions. Its institutional appearance does not represent its antinomian content; therefore, on the theoretical level, it is not subject to Weber's developmentally linear model in which charisma undergoes its birth, routinization, and demise as a matter of course. In other words, the process of institutionalization in Tibetan monastic settings peculiarly preserves and rejuvenates the genuine charisma of *tulku*s. Third, genuine tantric charisma is transmissible to those who wish to acquire it. This aspect of Nyingma *tulkus*' charisma is particularly pertinent to the questions in later chapters: Why and how are non-Tibetans increasingly attracted to Tibetan Buddhism and making a commitment to Tibetan *tulkus*? What are the grounds of non-Tibetans' imagination of Tibetan Buddhism? Why are charismatically induced emotions and Tibetan *tulkus* vulnerable to commercialization?

Charismatic collectivity of Nyingma *tulkus*

The word *tulku* (སྤྲུལ་སྐུ།) means "transforming-body;" therefore its derivative meaning is "reincarnation." *Tul* (སྤྲུལ།), as the imperative part of the word, comes from *tulpa* (སྤྲུལ་པ།) which means "change," "transformation," "fantasy," "a person with the ability to produce fantasies or mirages," or "a person or an object produced by magic power." It is also a verb. The meaning of *tulku* as a cultural–religious institution does not cease at the level of what is known as the transmigration or rebirth of the consciousness or the soul in popular terms. It is rather limited to a particular category of individuals who are deemed embodiments of specific lineages of Buddhist teachings. The consciousnesses or souls of these individuals are trans-life, meaning that they do not live one life but continue on one after another in continuously different bodies. Their *tulpa*, or transformation, is inherently connected with bodhisattva vows compelling the return to sentient realms to liberate others from agony instead of attaining Buddhahood. With their soteriologically conscious choice, their repeated births in the human realm are said to be fantasies or mirages the purpose of which is to exemplify the miraculous results of one's practising of the Buddha's teachings. Although *tulkus* have their earthly parents, they are nevertheless only in, not of, this world. Their earthly appearance is similar to a 3-D holograph, a projected fantasy for teaching purposes since their bodhisattvahood no longer belongs to the cycle of birth and death. This fantasy-like bodhisattva-mode of being is extensively described in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. Shakyamuni Buddha was the first *tulku* born in the human realm, as far as human memory is able to recall. In this respect, the function of the Tibetan *tulku* system is to re-enliven the past teachings of the Buddha with successive reincarnate lamas,

making the past present with fantastic narratives about how a spiritually accomplished person acts in this world.

The four *tulkus* mentioned in the beginning of this chapter possess their own distinct lineages, and all are associated with local folk narratives about their previous incarnations in Nyingma communities of Kham and Amdo. Hwaldan Tashi's predecessor was the renowned Siddhe Lama, whose birth in 1919 was prophesized by the first Dudjom Rinpoche (བདུད་འཇོམས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།), founder of the Terser (གཏེར་གསར།), New Visionary treasure-revealing tradition. One prominent memory of Siddhe Lama is that at many of his *phowa* (འཕོ་བ།) rituals over half of the participants would faint and thus enter altered states of consciousness. This particular type of fainting is an expected sign indicating the efficacy of the ritual. As a reincarnation of Khandrol Wisa, the Dakini of Dremed Odser (དྲི་མེད་འོད་ཟེར།), a son of the first Dudjom Rinpoche, Khandrol Lhajam was one of Siddhe Lama's intimate disciples and inherited the identical spiritual power in her *phowa* ritual performance. Konchok Renchen Rinpoche's teacher was the renowned Khenchen Tsewang Rentsen (མཁན་ཆེན་ཚེ་དབང་རིག་འཛིན།) of Amdo, who decided to end his life by flying into the sky when Chinese soldiers tied him up on horseback in the 1950s. Folk narratives about these *tulkus* may sound outlandish to those of a modern urban upbringing. However, they reinforce the salience of the trans-life phenomenon and the miraculous deeds of *tulkus* in addition to reinforcing textual references pertaining to their respective lineages. Oftentimes, the appearances of Nyingma *tulkus* are not necessarily magnetic, but rather their lineages and the folk narratives about the miraculous acts of their healing or ritual performance are what set the charismatic tone; thus, the charisma of a *tulku* is inherent rather than coincidental in this lifetime only. It is vertically connected with his previous incarnations and horizontally manifested in his community, whether monastic or lay.

I started my fieldwork in 2001 at Sangye Tsering (སངས་རྒྱས་ཚེ་རིང་།) Rinpoche's Smyoshil Monastery in eastern Kham. This monastery is named after a mountainous site where it is said that Padmasambhava once lived during his solitary meditation; he left his hand-print on the precipice of the sacred mountain. The size of the monastery is a small fraction of the size of Kathog Monastery, located in the same area, but it has drawn pilgrims from Lhasa, Golok, coastal China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and North America. Sangye Tsering Rinpoche is the reincarnation of Khenpo Ngawang Palzang (མཁན་པོ་ངག་དབང་ དཔལ་བཟང་།), who, according to a local folktale, once threw a rock the size of a cabin over a mountain. Khenpo Ngawang Palzang of said legend, was born in Smyoshil in 1887. One day, as a child herding yaks with his younger sister, he saw a mirage of a large monastery on a mountain slope. Later, this vision became reality. Khenpo Ngawang Palzang was the founder of Smyoshil Monastery. Many of his disciples became renowned tantric masters. Among them, Chadral Sangye Dorje (བྱ་བྲལ་སངས་རྒྱས་རྡོ་རྗེ།), who mentored Thomas Merton in Dharamsala in the 1960s, is still actively giving tantric instructions in Nepal even now in his late nineties.

Unlike the commanding appearance of his predecessor, Sangye Tsering Rinpoche looks more like a nomadic elder than a prominent reincarnate lama of eminent Nyingma lineage. His soft voice and slight build do not give him an overpowering projection. Similar to what happened to other *tulkus* of his generation,

Sangye Tsering Rinpoche was imprisoned twice by the Chinese state during the years of the Religious Reform and the Cultural Revolution in the mid-twentieth century. Many monasteries were at that time destroyed, and monks and nuns were physically subject to violence and imprisonment. Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's lower spine and right hip were seriously injured when a Red Guard repeatedly beat him with a crowbar. These injuries left permanent marks on his body, and he limps when he walks. His appearance, as well as his daily occupations, in many ways does not resemble that of urban peers in the West such as Sogyal Rinpoche or Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche. He and Tashi Drolma, his *khandrol*, live a simple life with their son and daughter-in-law. He spends his day mostly on his multifunctional bed, where he reads texts, takes charge of monastic daily affairs, performs healing and provides spiritual counsel for pilgrims and nomads herding in the vicinity of the monastery. Regardless of my perception of his ordinariness in his personal appearance and in what he does inside his house, Sangye Tsering Rinpoche is a "mana-figure" (Durkheim 1915:223), or a person who possesses extraordinary quality. It is this inner quality that magnetizes his monastic community and pilgrims from afar.

Derived from its Melanesian cultural context, R.H. Codrington delineates *mana* as "what works to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature" (Codrington 1957:118–19). Roger M. Keesing's linguistic and ethnographic analysis of *mana* reveals more complexity of how *mana* as a supernatural force works within individuals and their communities. Based on his fieldwork, the word *mana* is both a stative verb and a verbal noun rather than a substantive noun as Codrington proposed. Keesing states,

> Mana is used as a transitive verb as well: ancestors and gods mana-ize people and their efforts. Where mana is used as a noun, it is (usually) not as a substantive but as an abstract verbal noun denoting the state or quality of mana-ness (of a thing or act) or being-mana (of a person). Things that are mana are efficacious, potent, successful, true, fulfilled, realized: they "work." Mana-ness is a state of efficacy, success, truth, potency, blessing, luck, realization – an abstract state or quality, not an invisible spiritual substance or medium.
>
> Keesing 1984:138

This is particularly relevant to the case of *tulkus*. In my equation of their charisma with *mana*, *tulkus* are concrete individuals and the *mana*-ness in their personhood is mostly not definable mystical forces or supernatural power. If they do possess supernatural power, it is personalized in them; thus, this is not beyond the reach of ordinary people, as Codrington suggested in the Melanesian case.

From Keesing's perspective, I treat Sangye Tsering Rinpoche as a *mana*-figure in that I see his charisma not as the property of his personality; instead, his charisma is collective in nature while incarnated in a human body and manifested in the physical surrounding of its incarnation. In his study of the Theravada saints of Thailand, Stanley Tambiah also see the *mana*-quality in them as he evokes Marcel Mauss' delineation of *mana* as "a contagious and transmissible force possessed by both objects and spirit beings" (Tambian 1984:338). From this angle, Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's *mana*, not as mysterious as its Melanesian

counterpart, is inherently the gift of his tantric lineage. As a Buddhist charismatic, Sangye Tsering Rinpoche draws people to him not because of his oratory skills but because he is a *tulku*, a reincarnate lama embodied with a distinct tantric tradition fundamentally connected with Padmasambhava, the Indian master who brought Buddhism to Tibet. In addition, his predecessors such as Jigme Lingpa Rinpoche and Guru Virochana are an integral part of the collective memory of Tibetan Buddhism. He *mana*-izes the members of his immediate community, as well as pilgrims from afar, with Buddhist-specific empowerment. As one would expect, his charisma permeates and finds expressions on the monastery grounds and at nearby sacred sites. It flows from object to object and from person to person when objects or persons come in contact with it. It can be viewed as a sacred contagion in the Durkheimian sense (Durkheim 1952:128), the influence of which descends upon his monastic and lay communities as well as on pilgrims from afar.

My living in his house made me also susceptible to his *mana*-like influence. When I walked out of his house, monks, nuns, and nomads would often invite me into their cabins and tents for tea and fresh yogurt. At first, I thought that this was only common hospitality at work. However, after a while I realized that I was receiving a type of reverence that I did not deserve, when they insisted on my sitting in the center of their gatherings and on preparing food that was reserved for special occasions. Sangye Tsering's sharing his living space with me apparently qualified me as a close recipient of his spiritual power, from the perception of bystanders. Apparently, the closer one gets to the incarnation of the sacred, the more likely one may also be treated as a part of the sacred or at least as its representation. In reality, Sangye Tsering Rinpoche is selective about imparting his tantric teachings to potential learners. I was not among his chosen disciples at the monastery who actually received his tantric instructions. But the point here has little to do with who receives which secret teachings from him; it has to do with how one connects oneself with the currents of the collectively acknowledged Buddhist sacredness.

At Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's monastery, the flow of his intangible spiritual power is communally cherished and finds its representation or *mana*-izing effect in myriad ways. Pilgrims who arrive at Smyoshil start their first day by paying their homage to Sangye Tsering Rinpoche and Khandrol Tashi Drolma. The remainder of the day will be spent on a guided tour of the sacred sites of the monastery, located on the precipice of the sacred mountain peak nearby. Lively young monks between the ages of eight and sixteen are often guides for the pilgrims. My own guide was a thirteen-year-old monk. The first site he led me to was Padmasambhava's hand-print on the rock face. It is discernibly a print of a large hand. He also showed me the foot-prints and fist-prints of Sangye Tsering Rinpoche and his son, which have been sunk into the solid rock in the same manner as that of Padmasambhava. These sacred marks are said to be the manifestations of enlightened masters' *mngonhi* (མངོན་ཤེས།) which refers to the lucid revelation of all hidden knowledge – past, present, and future – based on Buddha-like wisdom. Its force can penetrate through material objects such as the hard rocks on the Smyoshil Mountain. This is a common sacred feature of Nyingma charismatics.

Germano also narrates his witness of sacred objects unearthed by the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, which contributed to the charismatic presence of this most revered tantric master in Kham (Germano 1998). In this regard, these sacred objects and physical marks of enlightened teachers are a vital source of charismatic empowerment for tantric practitioners. This externalization of the genuine charisma of a Tibetan *tulku* coincides with the sacralization of Thai Buddhist amulets, as Tambiah lucidly points out, "The charisma is concretized and sedimented in objects; these objects are repositories of power" (Tambiah 1984:335). For Tibetan lay folks and pilgrims from distant places, the hand- and foot-prints of Padmasambhava and Sangye Tsering Rinpoche on the rocks of Smyoshil's sacred mountain are regarded as a proof of Buddhist enlightenment; thus, their magnetizing effect is predictably conspicuous on the monastic ground. In this respect, the charisma of *tulkus* is not a static substance; instead it is in motion. Its *mana*-ization of objects and people conveys the sense of empowerment, potency, and efficacy.

I share the same sentiment as William Swatos, that charisma is fundamentally collective and "is always contingent upon a shared belief on the part of both leader and followers in the genuineness of the leader's charismatic possession" (Swatos 1986:134). The shared sense of the sacred at Smyoshil is extended beyond its monastic boundary. Many nomads, especially women, undertake daily circumambulation of Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's house. Their devotion to him is extraordinarily heartening. Once, Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's son gave me two large posters of his father. On the way to my guest room in Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's house, three nomadic women saw these photos, and asked if they could have them. As my reluctance showed on my face, the three women all knelt down. I was shamefully touched, and handed the two posters to them.

In late fall of 2002, an eighty-two-year-old nomadic woman moved into the woody side of the monastery ground with a torn tent buttressed by tree trunks. She had come to the monastery to die, wanting to reach the end of her life in Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's presence. For the first fifteen days after she moved to the monastery, many nuns attended her by sending yogurt and bread to her. She did not speak clearly and her hearing was impaired, but one of the nuns had been able to read her lips. From that nun, I learned that when the nomadic woman had been in her early sixties, she attended Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's *phowa* ritual (ritual for the preparation of conscious dying), and had obtained permission from him to die at the monastery. Most importantly, she had been given the admittance to receive spiritual guidance for her departing consciousness for her next life. Four days before she passed away, she stopped receiving food from the nuns. After she quietly died among the juniper trees, Sangye Tsering Rinpoche performed *phowa* ritual for her.

In the case of Sangye Tsering Rinpoche, the field of genuine charisma is a field of spiritual energy that goes beyond the charismatic, and its tangible manifestations are readily identifiable for those who enter that field. Hereon, Weber's confinement of genuine religious charisma within a given personality (1978:1114) does not allow enough inclusion of the culturally specific ambience of the charismatic into an interpretive understanding of genuine charisma. Genuine charisma

is a vital collective representation of the sacred in various religious traditions, not just Tibetan Buddhism. On this ground, I take a Durkheimian turn to look upon religion as a system of collective representation (Pickering 1984:295), in which, again, the preservation and expression of genuine charisma is not the sole action of a given personality but is “a relationship, a mutual mingling of the inner selves of the leader and followers” (Lindholm 1990:7). From this angle, charisma is a collective register that is an inherent part of the sacred, revered by a given collective constituency. As Lindholm notes, “a venerated leader is less a person than the ‘group incarnate and personified’” (ibid.: 32).

In Durkheim’s sociology of religion, *mana*-figures and totemic beings are synonymous with one another. This perspective makes the inner force of a *mana*-figure or a totemic being empirically observable. In this respect, I discern that the charismatic bond of Sangye Tsering Rinpoche with pilgrims and his monastic community qualitatively resembles that of a totemic bond. In Durkheim’s analysis, the totemic being and its human counterpart reside in one entity which shares the same sacred character. With this shared sacred character, the individual member of a totemic community has a “double nature” (Durkheim 1915:157): two beings co-exist within this entity, a human and a totemic being, or the mundane and the supermundane. Through the community, the totemic being is ushered into the human fellowship in which the totemic being and its human counterpart “are made of the same flesh” (ibid.:157). The totem is that which makes the unity or the solidarity of a given social group and, in turn, the group also embodies the sacred character of the totem. Durkheim’s logic lies in the fact that the sacred character of the totem unites all members of the group based on their “feeling of resemblance” (ibid.:171) between the totemic being and its group members. In this manner, the sacred content of the totemic being circulates unimpeded among the members of the totemic community. The sacred quality that each member possesses within is identical to that of the totemic being itself. As Durkheim remarks, “When a sacred thing is subdivided, each of its parts remains equal to the thing itself … the part is equal to the whole. … It has the same powers” (ibid.:261). This totemic “feeling of resemblance” is pertinent to the tantric practice of the Buddhist goal; that is, the enlightened state of being which is qualitatively the same as that of the historical Buddha. One of Sangye Tsering Rinpoche’s admonitions to his pilgrims states, “If you only look upon your teacher as a person, your achievement will be only the achievement of a dog. If you revere your teacher as a Buddha, you will have the achievement of a Buddha.”

Although the ultimate state of Buddhist achievement transcends dualities of all sorts, such as the sacred and the profane, or this world and the other world, Tibetan Buddhism represents expressions of the sacred by demarcating itself from the mundane world. In this sense, genuine Buddhist charisma in the case of Sangye Tsering Rinpoche is a collective representation of the Buddhist sacred. Franck Pearce remarks, “The sacredness of sacred beings is an effect of collective representations – ‘sacred beings exist only in and through their representations’ (Durkheim 1915:349) – and, these in turn are tied into collective practices” (Pearce 2001:212).

Obviously Sangye Tsering Rinpoche as a *tulku* is more a collective entity rather than a private person, because of his embodiment of a distinct set of Buddhist collective memories and knowledge. As a collective entity, or a totemic being, he can be seen as "a transpersonal, spiritual being." As Eric Neumann remarks on the transpersonality of totem, "He is transpersonal because, although an animal, a plant, or whatever else, he is such not as an individual entity, not as a person, but as an idea, a species" (Neumann 1964:145). In regard to Tibetan *tulkus*, the locus of this spiritual species is not exclusively within their personalities; instead, it is in what Lindholm calls "the inner content of the charismatic character" (Lindholm 1990:24). In the cultural history of Tibetan *tulkus*, the hagiography of a *tulku* underscores his inner content rather than his familial ancestry. Herein, the inner content is synonymous with the lineage of the *tulku*. In contrast to the genre of conventional biography, it is the essential function of hagiography to highlight the sacred content of a given hallowed individual, as evidenced across various religious traditions. Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's short hagiography as written by Lama Gyatso, Smyoshil's distinguished *khenpo*, precisely fits this religious narrative genre. Lama Gyatso writes:

> … that day, people saw a rainbow emerge in the sky. Meanwhile, they also heard sounds of conch shells and saw large snowflakes and other auspicious signs. Unrivaled conviction arose from their minds. … A baby *tulku* was born on that day. The birthplace was a sacred abode of Padmasambhava. The *tulku*'s father was Padma Tsering; his mother was Tseyang Lhamo, a woman without defilement. It was this couple who gave birth to an extraordinary infant, born with his head up and in the cross-legged position in the morning of the fifteenth day of the fourth month in the Wooden Monkey year. Fragrance, rainbows, eagles, and other wondrous signs accompanied the birth of the baby *tulku*. The family members were all astounded with this amazing infant. His father named him Sangye Tsering. Khenpo Ngawang Palzang, the baby *tulku*'s previous incarnation, once in the middle of performing an initiation, sadly remarked, "After I die, I will be reborn in Gongpo area. My body, speech, and consciousness will be entirely committed to this rebirth. But, elder khenpos at Kathog Monastery may not take care of this old man (himself), while the young khenpos are unable to do so. What shall I do?" At the time, the young Chadral Rinpoche beseeched him, "When you're reborn in Gongpo, please let me take the responsibility to recognize and enthrone your reincarnation!".
>
> Gyatso 2003

As Khenpo Ngawang Palzang prophesied, his reincarnation had a celebratory birth. Chadral Rinpoche did what he promised: he identified and enthroned the baby *tulku*. Unarguably, the birth of a *tulku* in Tibet is a public event with cross-references including prophecies and official recognitions from honorable monastic elders. Throughout Lama Gyatso's hagiographic narrative, the baby *tulku*'s parents only appear in the beginning while the rest of it is centered on the details of the extraordinary qualities of the *tulku* himself – Sangye Tsering

Rinpoche. He is a communal hierophany, the manifestation of the sacred (Eliade 1959:11–12).

Returning to the theoretical significance of the idea of genuine charisma, the Tibetan case I have presented so far compels us to take in a new consideration for the life-span of charisma not as a linear one, as Weber discerns, but rather as a continuously rejuvenated inner process of religious community. As a spiritual species, the inner content and the genuine charisma of a *tulku* is a collective body of liberative Buddhist knowledge. Thus, charisma is an idea which is expressed as a communally binding force. "[I]t binds people together in ways that transcend and transmogrify the sense of the follower, and quite possibly, the self of the leader as well" (Lindholm 1990:7). In this sense, genuine charisma is a re-process – that is, re-counting, re-collecting, re-visiting, re-newing, and re-celebrating. It is a matter of bringing the presence of the past to the present, a call for regaining a paradise lost. Thus, the nascent moment of charisma is the moment of renewal as well as the moment of thorough newness, breathing spiritual inspiration into those who are in contact with it.

The interior being of *tulkus*

Weber treats genuine charisma and tradition as two opposing forces, and in their interactive process, tradition seems to have the upper hand that eventually transforms genuine charisma into a commonality framed in an institution. According to him, the merger of genuine charisma with tradition is tantamount to the routinization of the revolutionary nature of genuine charisma; as he notes, "the charismatic message inevitably becomes dogma, doctrine, theory, law or petrified tradition" (Weber 1978:1122). Historically, especially after the ninth century, monasteries in Tibet have been centered upon *tulkus*, both well and lesser known. This historical phenomenon is an integral part of the monastic system and ensures the successions of *tulkus*. This aspect of the monastic system has truly transformed the charisma of *tulkus* into a conspicuous tradition that is now globally received, as demonstrated through the propagation of Tibetan Buddhism in the West by the 14th Dalai Lama and other contemporary *tulkus*. This tradition of *tulkus* adheres to its dogma and rules; however, it is not petrified as Weber's typologized assessment of routinized charisma might indicate. Instead, the tradition of Tibetan *tulkus* utilizes monastic resources to guarantee the renewal of genuine Buddhist charisma. Thus, unlike Weber's sense of charismatic education as part and parcel of the routinization process, charismatic education in the Tibetan case is a rejuvenation rather than a process of demise.

Two years after the 2001 passing of his predecessor Siddhe Lama based in Dorkha Monastery (དོར་ཁ་དགོན་པ།) of Golok, Hwaldan Tashi was chosen as the master's reincarnation from among five candidates. Dorkha Monastery is situated in Gade County, the poorest area of contemporary Golok. Like Sangye Tsering Rinpoche, Siddhe Lama was also imprisoned by the Chinese state for nearly two decades, and meanwhile his monastery suffered from destruction. Now, Dorkha is still slowly recovering from the past destruction. In spite of the lack of resources, the monastery has shown its effort to care for and provide Hwaldan Tashi with

tantric instruction based on Siddhe Lama's Dudjom lineage. His team of instructors and caretakers consists of Siddhe Lama's four intimate disciples and Hwaldan Tashi's parents.

In the summer of 2003, shortly after the child's enthronement as Siddhe Lama's reincarnation, that group of Siddhe Lama's Chinese devotees and monastic elders crammed reverently into Hwaldan Tashi's parents' tiny home. As the weeping of the devotees quieted down, the monastic elders began to discuss Hwaldan Tashi's monastic training. Over the next few hours, a decision was reached that Hwaldan Tashi would be relocated with his mother to a temporary house adjacent to the monastery. In the meantime, the division of labor was assessed among his instructors. Khandrol Lhajam and a nephew of the late Siddhe Lama are now responsible for imparting ritual knowledge to Hwaldan Tashi.

The monks, Khenpo Gendun and Shambha, teach him literacy and textual recitation. Because of his extensive connections with pilgrims from urban China and abroad, Janangara Rinpoche (ཛྙ་ན་ཀ་ར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།), a Chinese disciple of Siddhe Lama, is expected to conduct fundraising for Hwaldan Tashi's monastic upbringing. Toward the end of this meeting, a small donation from lay devotees was allotted to building a small cabin in the monastery grounds, as Hwaldan Tashi's new residence.

Charismatic education, as in the case of Hwaldan Tashi, is a demanding process for a young boy. He will not spend his childhood with his peers. Instead, he is to display the discipline of an adult monk who, after rising at 5:30 daily, begins his rigorous training with his teachers. This demanding process is the monastery's collective work to reinstitute in Hwaldan Tashi what his predecessor had mastered. When his childish playfulness disrupts his training, he is dealt a spanking by Khenpo Gendun and Shambha. In addition to his daily training at Dorkha Monastery, he also makes pilgrimages to receive teachings from other tantric teachers in the same lineage. In late fall of 2006, Hwaldan Tashi, with his entourage of monastic instructors, participated in an initiation for the first Dudjom Rinpoche's teachings. Tulku Otse (སྤྲུལ་སྐུ་ཨོ་ཚེ།), one of the very few teachers of Dudjom lineage in Golok, performed the initiation. An initiation usually consists of two parts, namely *dbang* and *lhong*. In Tibetan, *dbang* (དབང་།) means authorization or being given permission to practise, while *lhong* (ལུང་།) means lineage of teachings. For Tulku Otse's initiation, seven days were taken for the completion of *dbang* and ten days were required for *lhong*. Each day the initiation started at 6:00am and ended at 8:00pm. It is particularly worthwhile to mention that the process of *lhong* was literally the reading, by Tulku Otse, of the first Dudjom Rinpoche's teachings, verbatim, from a twenty-one volume set. It was a tedious process; however, within the ten days, the teachings of the first Dudjom Rinpoche's entire lifetime were condensed and infused into initiates. This concentrated dose of teachings will be recollected and reactivated continually in the initiates' practice throughout their lifetimes. Hwaldan Tashi returned to Dorkha Monastery with the twenty-one volumes of the first Dudjom Rinpoche's teachings, in preparation for new lessons.

For the last three years of rigorous training, Hwaldan Tashi has begun to exhibit a certain charisma that he did not yet have when he was three, and which boys in his age group do not usually possess. Especially since returning in spring 2008

from a pilgrimage to visit the Dalai Lama in India, nomads in the vicinity have been regularly coming to Hwaldan Tashi for blessings. According to Weber, religious charisma is an inner quality of the charismatic. In Hwaldan Tashi's case, this inner quality is embodied in him but its recollection is a collective process. From a Durkheimian perspective, I see this inner quality as an "interior being" of the collective body of Buddhists, which is an inherent property of the historical Buddha's genuine charisma. Durkheim uses "interior being" to delineate the sacred dimension of "the totemic animal and man" (Durkheim 1915:151), which is unitive and collective in nature as its sacredness binds together the entire totemic community. On other occasions, he refers to the interior being simply as "the principle of life which animates it: this is the soul" (ibid.:274). From this perspective, it is not an exaggeration to say that the inner contents of *tulkus* are the "soul" of Tibetan Buddhism. In this Durkheimian sociological framework, this collective soul can be best described as "the social fact" which constitutes "the beliefs, tendencies and practices of the group taken collectively" (Durkheim 1982:54), and which expresses "a certain state of the collective mind" (ibid.:55) because of the transpersonal nature of this animating soul. Thinking in line with Durkheim's sociology of religion, I also discern *tulkus* as personifications of the "extreme immateriality of social facts" (Pickering 2000:45). This is because the interior being of the *tulku* does not perish, yet its numerous, successive bodies are subject to birth and death just like all other sentient beings. Moreover, this interior being is collective in nature, representing memories of the Buddha's teachings. Its reinstitution in a young *tulku* requires the monastic system's sustained nurturing and training in a collective fashion, as shown in the case of Hwaldan Tashi.

It is agreed among most scholars of Tibetan studies that Tibetan monasticism is committed to the continuation of the historical Buddha's teachings and the perpetuation of this monastic tradition among the lay population of Tibet (Goldstein 1991; Thurman 1995). Tibetan monasticism is indisputably an institution which possesses features resembling similarly those of secular organizations, i.e. rules and regulations, personnel hierarchy, top-down style of distribution of resources, and mechanisms in place to deal with financial insecurity. These features of Tibetan monasticism could indeed eventually end charisma from Weber's point of view, because these circumstances fit Weber's notion of the routinization which takes effect when genuine charisma becomes "a concrete historical structure" and "is often transformed beyond recognition" (Weber 1978:1121). For Weber, these institutional characteristics reflect "the conditions of everyday life" (ibid.:1121–2) and the worldly powers which are assumed in service of its eventual domination over genuine charisma. For Weber, routinized charisma is charisma which is alienated from its "revolutionary" and "unstable" essence or purity (ibid.:1121). This assessment has largely to do with Weber's conceptualization of charismatic attributes as personal, rather than transpersonal and transgenerational as in the case of Tibetan *tulkus*. This generic model of charismatic study has been widely applied to various individual case studies, including those of Gandhi, Mao, Hitler, and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. It is understandable that these case studies lend themselves to theories of person-centered charisma because, unlike *tulkus*, these charismatic individuals did not possess a trans-generational lineage. To herein

broaden the theoretical scope of such individualistic studies of charisma, I turn now to Philip Smith's more markedly inclusive perspective, which advocates for the contextualization of the charismatic within a specific cultural structure (Smith 2000:101–11). In his cultural analysis of charisma, Smith recognizes that a distinctly religion-based cultural structure tends "to mark out charisma from routine deviance, suggesting that the charismatic is the bearer of a transcendent, positive essence" (ibid.:103). A cultural structure as such, which is saturated with the moral and spiritual values and practices of a world religion, seems to safeguard rather than diminish the transcendental essence of charisma.

The monastic system of Tibetan Buddhism, as von Brück points out, primarily sustains "the scriptural tradition" and the "reincarnated lama (*Tulku*, *sprul sku*), who embodies lineages of tradition that have shaped a specific monastic interpretation of Tibetan Buddhism and social allegiance that has given Tibetan Buddhism its (regional) coherence" (2001:330). To add, from my ethnographic observations, the interpretation and sustainability of scriptural tradition in the Tibetan monastic system is largely upheld by successive *tulkus*. Again, the crucial function of a *tulku* in a monastery lies in his or her interior being as a bodhisattva, or a Buddhist spiritual being, who has the freedom to choose his or her rebirth in the sentient realm in fulfillment of the bodhisattva vows – to liberate sentient beings from agony in the cycle of birth and death (ibid.:333). As von Brück puts it simply, "The *tulku* is a physical manifestation of higher levels of consciousness" (ibid.:332) and "a personalized expression of the cumulative tradition" (ibid.:334). From this angle, each new reincarnation of a *tulku* in a new person is also a moment of renewal in a given lineage. The charismatic education of monasticism, as witnessed in Hwaldan Tashi's case, is primarily responsible for the actual process of the renewal of his lineage in a new human body.

The transmissibility of the inner quality of *tulkus*

As a cultural anthropologist, I am wary of essentialist pitfalls found in both scholarly and popularized conceptions of Tibetan Buddhist enthusiasts. The works of Chögyam Trungpa (1973), Donald Lopez (1998), and Orville Schell (2000) all coincidently criticize the fantasized images of Tibetan *tulkus* in literature, cinematography, and Tibetan Buddhist communities in the West, which mystify and typecast Tibetan *tulkus* as a category of spiritual virtuosos who are above and beyond the reach of common people. This phenomenon, in my view, corresponds to what Liah Greenfield deems the "unreflective imitation of the excited behavior of others" (Greenfield 1985:127). This has little to do with the actual life and the religious function of lineage-based *tulkus*. Truly, *tulkus* are charismatic; however, their charisma is not based upon "blind faith" (Madsen and Snow 1991:6–7) and "epileptic seizure" (Lindholm 1990:26). My point is to re-emphasize the personalized spiritual quality of *tulkus*' genuine charisma, and, in the meantime, to make an argument that the inner quality of *tulkus* is entirely transmissible, meaning that anyone who seriously wishes to acquire it can eventually become a *tulku* or a *tulku*-like Buddhist teacher. In other words, the transmission does not have to be vertically passed from the previous incarnation to the current incarnation; instead,

it is acquired through one's disciplined practice. This argument is based upon my experience with contemporary Tibetan teachers who were not initially recognized as *tulkus*, but who have been retroactively recognized as *tulkus* upon achieving a certain degree of demonstrable understanding and becoming popularly acknowledged as teachers of spiritual achievement by both their monastic traditions and lay adherents.

In the history of Tibetan Buddhism, the retroactive recognition of *tulkus* also took place with the institution as well as the individual incarnations of the Dalai Lama. In 1578, after Altan Khan, the de facto Mongol King, bestowed the title of the Dalai Lama to Sonam Gyatso, then head of Gelukpa, Gendun Drup and Gendun Gyatso, the two predecessors of Sonam Gyatso, were retroactively recognized respectively as the first and the second Dalai Lamas (Chen Qingying 2006:81). The Mongol's conferring of the title is often understood as the result of the strategic alliance of Gelukpa with Altan Khan; however, the retroactive inclusion of Gendun Drup and Gendun Gyatso in the lineage of the Dalai Lama was based on Sonam Gyatso's spiritual achievement which was considered identical to theirs (ibid.:81). In both historical and Buddhist senses, a *tulku* lineage is an institution but a *tulku* himself possesses demonstrated spiritual merits that either connect him with his previous incarnations or qualify him as the origin of a lineage. Similar practices for the retroactive recognition of *tulkus* are also seen among other *tulku* lineages in Tibet.

Khandrol Lhajam, Hwaldan Tashi's ritual instructor, was not enthroned as a *tulku* when she was three. She grew up in Dzorge, Ngawa, currently in Sichuan Province. When her mother was making arrangements for her to get married at the age of seventeen, the young Khandrol Lhajam refused it and meanwhile began to have severe migraines that left her bedridden. One day, on her way up a mountain to collect firewood, a local medicine man stopped her and foretold that she would die soon if she did not become a nun. There were quite a few monasteries in the area, but none of them admitted nuns; she did not have the means to travel elsewhere. She told her father about this prophetic encounter. The next day he brought her to Gnazhi Drubchen Rinpoche (གནས་གཞི་སྒྲུབ་ཆེན།), a high Nyingma lama known for his ritual singing, who had been forced to return to the lay life in the 1960s. One of his consorts was Siddhe Lama's younger sister. Upon agreeing to be young Khandrol Lhajam's first teacher, he requested her family to build a cabin on the top of Mt. Dzamblhala, twenty miles away from her family village. Each time after she received her lessons from Gnazhi Drubchen Rinpoche, she immediately returned to the cabin. Her Dharma songs and ritual recitations echoed from the mountains for the next ten years. Toward the end of the 1980s, fifty nuns joined her – all from surrounding villages. Shortly thereafter, the site became the only convent in the area. For the following decade she traveled to Golok, Kham, and Ü-Tsang (Central Tibet), taking discipleship with Siddhe Lama, Dordzechen Rinpoche, Chosnyid Rinpoche, and many other Nyingma *tulkus*.

Unlike her male counterparts, Khandrol Lhajam's teaching style is centered not on Dharma talks but on Dharma singing. Most of her Dharma songs are the visionary verses and melodies recorded by the first and the second Dudjom Rinpoches from their dream-visions. During the last decade of the twentieth

century, she has mostly devoted her time to practising the tantric teachings from the Dudjom lineage. Both the first and second Dudjom Rinpoches were *tertons* (གཏེར་སྟོན།), revealers of *terma* (གཏེར་མ།), or hidden Dharma treasures. There are two types of *terma*. One refers to veiled objects, i.e. texts and ritual instruments, while another refers to the inspirational teachings hidden in one's consciousness or mind-stream. Both types can only be found by *tertons*. The tantric verses that Khandrol Lhajam sings came through the mind-streams of both Dudjom Rinpoches. From this tantric perspective, consciousness, mind, or mind-stream is also understood as an intangible space where tantric masters, such as Padmasambhava, have hidden Dharma treasures for future use.

Her appearance, ritual mastery, and the efficacy of her ritual performance are all said to resemble those of Khandrol Wisa. In 2000, Ngeshe Drubchen Rinpoche, Dordzechen Rinpoche, and Chosnyid Rinpoche recognized her as a *tulku* of Khandrol Wisa. The source of the inspirational tantric songs of Khandrol Lhajam clearly comes from a distinct tantric lineage; however, her own single-minded solitary practice is what enabled her to become a vessel for these visionary tantric verses.

While in Golok in the 1990s, Khandrol Lhajam met Chadral Choyang Rinpoche (བྱ་བྲལ་ཆོས་དབྱིངས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།), known commonly to his community as Akha Choyang. Also a disciple of the late Siddhe Lama, Akha Choyang is a modern exemplar of the *rime* (རིས་མེད།), or non-sectarian movement of Tibetan Buddhism, and is a very popular lama in both eastern Kham and Golok. Although he is a Geluk monk, he is nevertheless better known for his received and practised teachings from Nyingmapa, Jonangpa, and Sakyapa traditions. Most of his teachers have been Tibetan tantric luminaries, including the 4th Dodzechen Rinpoche, the late Visionary Dorje Dradul (the youngest son of the first Dudjom Rinpoche), Mensor Rinpoche, and the late Siddhe Lama. Akha Choyang was born into a nomadic family in Gade, Golok in 1945. In 1958 when he was fourteen years old, the Chinese military "liberated" Golok. It was in this year that he took a vow of silence. For the next twenty years, he lived as a wanderer and a vagabond who dug through trash for leftovers. He was often drafted by the Chinese as a janitor or a road construction worker, and was robbed and beaten many times. Prior to the mid-1980s he was already well-known by both Tibetans and Chinese, though not as a highly venerated lama but rather as the pitifully "deaf and crazy monk" of Golok. Others had not yet comprehended his vow of silence. During that time, Buddhism was forbidden and nearly forgotten by many. In my interview with Tibetans who lived through that time period, many of them recalled Akha Choyang as the most filthy and piteous person in Golok. Darje, the first Communist governor of Golok, recollected that his office personnel often called in Akha Choyang to do cleaning and to transport construction materials. In Darje's reminiscence, Akha Choyang never resisted; instead, he always had a smile on his face. When he needed to communicate with Darje's staff, he would write what he needed on a piece of paper. One of Darje's assistants once proposed to have "this deaf and dumb monk" cured in the hospital as "a merciful deed of Chinese socialism."

Twenty years later, however, this "deaf" monk cured himself. He began to speak and to show the true color of his tantric practices. As a matter of fact, beneath the

popular notion of Akha Choyang as a "deaf and crazy" monk, he had been a firm tantric practitioner. His vow of silence afforded him an inner freedom from the destructive forces at that time, and shrouded him from forced activities such as weekly political studies and the "class struggle" sessions in which *tulkus* and well-known lamas were the targets of both symbolic and physical violence. Although Akha Choyang is no longer a "deaf and crazy monk," he nevertheless still retains the air of a wanderer. Unlike other well-known lamas, he does not wrap himself in new robes of exquisite fabric or have a large entourage of monastic assistants. Since I met him in 2002, I have seen him travel like a wandering monk with only a tiny tent and a few items for daily use. He receives offerings but gives them away to the poor and the needy. Among his Chinese devotees from coastal China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, Akha Choyang is equated with the monk Jigong, a legendary Chinese Ch'an monk of the late twelfth century who violated all the monastic rules he could and yet performed miracles, helping the poor and the suffering. This image-association is in fact not accurate, as Akha Choyang is fully a precept-bound monk. Unlike the legendary Jigong, he does not drink nor does he cultivate relationships with women. In the summer of 2006, when I visited Akha Choyang, he was working at a construction site with monks and lay persons; however, this time, he was building his own monastery. While working at the monastic construction site, he also received a constant flow of pilgrims who were seeking blessings from him. Whether rich or poor, he equally bestows blessings. One morning, in a period of two hours, Akha Choyang received a Jonangpa lama who sought advice on reading Kalachakra texts; accepted homespun wool yarn as an offering from a family that owns a small rug business in town; comforted a nomad who lost his yaks, and blessed a brand-new SUV driven by its well-to-do owner.

Although not as popular as Akha Choyang, Janangara Rinpoche, one of Hwalden Tashi's instructors, has traversed a similar path in terms of seeking tantric teachings from various teachers in eastern Kham and Golok, and eventually became a *tulku*-like teacher. Born in 1974 in a Han Chinese family in Shanxi Province, he lost his mother when he was five years old. At the age of fourteen, he became a monk in a Chinese monastic order. His Dharma name then was Wuzhu, which means "non-attachment." After reading the entire Mahayana Buddhist canon in less than two years, Wuzhu was profoundly touched by the Buddha's teachings. He had many questions and thoughts regarding the methods for and the state of enlightenment; however, there were no peers around him who were at a similar stage of practice. Nor did he find monastic elders who were caring enough to listen to his inquiries and reflections; on the contrary, some elders, out of jealousy, rather looked down upon him as an annoyance. He decided to leave the monastery as soon as he heard about Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Buddhist academy in Kham, arriving when he was sixteen years old. Under the guidance of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok and with instruction from Khenpo Sonam Darje, then in charge of teaching non-Tibetan students, he quickly excelled. In addition to completing tantric assignments, he also learned both spoken and written Tibetan so well that he was often taken as one of the local Tibetans when he spoke. Within two years, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok conferred upon him the title of *khenpo*, qualifying him as a teacher. In early 1995 when he visited Dragmgo Mdomang Monastery near

Sertar, the abbot there was so impressed by Wuzhu's accomplishment as a non-Tibetan that he bestowed upon him the title of Vajra Acharya. In the autumn of that same year he traveled to Dorkha Monastery, where he took discipleship with Siddhe Lama. He lived there until the passing of Siddhe Lama in 2001. During the six years at Dorkha, he received the full teachings of the first Dudjom Rinpoche from Siddhe Lama. Toward the end of his life, Siddhe Lama took in Wuzhu as an essence-disciple whose achievement was regarded as the same as his teacher. From Siddhe Lama, Wuzhu received his current Dharma name Acharya Janangara. Siddhe Lama's affection for his essence-disciple did not end there. Before Siddhe Lama passed away in the spring of 2001, he enjoined Janangara to inherit his position as the thirty-ninth abbot of Dorkha Monastery. The following year, Janangara was formally enthroned as the new abbot.

The purpose of charismatic education in the Tibetan Buddhist context is, on one hand, a regeneration process for the spiritual maturity of a newly recognized *tulku*. On the other hand, I also see charismatic education as a self-initiated quest for Buddhist enlightenment – situated within and sanctioned by the monastic system of Tibetan Buddhism. Most crucially, charismatic education in the Tibetan context is open to everyone who is willing to enter the tantric realm with voluntarily accepted monastic disciplines, as evidenced by the experiences of Khandrol Lhajam, Akha Choyang and Janangara Rinpoche. Their charisma is qualitatively the same as those who were recognized as *tulkus* when they were infants or toddlers. The difference is that Khandrol Lhajam, Akha Choyang and Janangara Rinpoche did not have a team of assigned instructors when they were young. Instead, they searched for their teachers. Their achievement is a subsequent effect of their sustained practice, and is not based on a prior recognition from within their lineage-related monastic systems.

The Tibetan monastic system in the context of contemporary Nyingmapa practice in Kham and Golok is directly responsible for educating lineage-based young *tulkus*. Its practical structure, additionally involving itself with matters of finance and bureaucracy, also makes charismatic education available for those who voluntarily take tutelage under their chosen monastic teachers. This aspect of Nyingma monasticism coincides with Goldstein and Paljor Tsarong's field research on a monastic settlement in Ladakh, India. In their observation, the Tibetan monastic system is not merely a "theocracy." This stereotypical term characterizes charismatic authority as a type of political structure, based in this case on the institution of the Dalai Lama. In their findings, Goldstein and Paljor Tsarong emphatically recognize the Tibetan monastic system as "one of human history's most ambitious and radical and social psychological experiments" and suggest it as "a cultural template" (Goldstein and Paljor Tsarong 1985:17), in which the ideals of Buddhism are rigorously cultivated. Of course, not every monk will become a charismatic teacher; however, this does not rule out the horizontal transmissibility of the inner quality of *tulkus* to non-*tulkus*. The cases of Akha Choyang and Janangara Rinpoche are not an exception from the rule, but rather are the result of the imperative practice of the Tibetan monastic system – whose endeavor is to train all possible participants toward the regeneration of exemplary teachers of Buddhism.

Antinomian and metaphoric functions of genuine tantric charisma

Most pilgrims who wept in front of their Tibetan *tulkus* did not travel a long distance just to feel the emotional currents directed toward their newly embraced Tibetan masters, but to seek the state of Buddhist enlightenment with a method of practice known in Nyingmapa as *dzogchen* or the Great Perfection. Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje (འཇིགས་བྲལ་ཡེ་ཤེས་རྡོ་རྗེ།), the second Dudjom Rinpoche, regarded *dzogchen* as an *atiyoga*, or the supreme yoga of tantric Buddhism by qualifying it as "the climax of all vehicles" (Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje 1991:294). *Dzogchen*, the name of an unnamable state of enlightenment, "refers to the sublime truth which is to be experienced through the pristine cognition of individual intrinsic awareness, free from the subject-object dichotomy, and which is described under various names, such as the ultimate truth, the genuine goal, the emptiness of emptiness and the great emptiness" (ibid.:309). Its denotation is simply not available, as its state is free from boundaries. Among Nyingma pilgrims, *dzogchen* is equated with *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha nature/seed. However, the difference between these two terms is that Buddha nature is mostly understood as the latent state of enlightenment (King 1991), while *dzogchen* is the hindrance-free enlightenment in both waking and dream states. Words and phrases describing *dzogchen* are mostly associated with an inner state of being, such as *ngowo* (ངོ་བོ། essence), *rangsa* (རང་ས། the place of self), *rangshil* (རང་ཤུལ། primitive state of mind), *rangkyid* (རང་སྐྱིད། one's mind-stream), *nyinnang* (གཉིད་སྣང་། waking state), and *menang* (རྨི་སྣང་། dream state). In this respect, there is nowhere else but to one's inner realm to look for this sublime state of enlightenment. The actual practice of *dzogchen*, comprised of step-by-step instructions, is in fact rule-bound; however, the end result pertains to a state of inner being without rules and regulations.

The logic of *dzogchen* is characteristically antinomian, meaning that one may bypass or transgress worldly boundaries for the purpose of obtaining spiritual transcendence. Antinomianism is a common theological phenomenon among world religions. For instance, Christian antinomians are those "who maintain that the moral law is not binding upon Christians under the law of grace" (Huehns 1951:11). *Dzogchen* Buddhists take the step-by-step training to embrace the non-dualistic state of enlightenment. The antinomian quality of *dzogchen* practice is what I call double transgression. Spiritual transcendence and transgression only differ in appearance when they are viewed from different social positions. In the history of Buddhism, many men and women have transgressed social rules and norms by leaving home and entering monastic life, following the footsteps of Prince Gotama. According to *dzogchen*, this style of renouncing the world is only the first transgression that is common in both Theravada and Mahayana traditions. Such "transgression" has become an accepted norm in many Buddhist countries, including Tibet. *Dzogchen* practice, going further, pushes for an ultimate transgression that advocates leaving behind monastic rules and doctrines altogether. Shockingly, such antinomian statements are commonplace among Nyingma *tulkus*:

> Renounce virtue.
> Do not pay attention to the Buddha.
> Do not reflect upon the doctrine.
> Worship not the *samgha*.
> Do not properly undertake the trainings.
> Try not to pacify worldly existence.
> Do not cross the river [of suffering].
> Dudjom 1991:900

> Virtue is not to be practiced,
> nor sin to be renounced;
> Awareness free from both virtue and sin
> is the Buddha-body of reality.
> Virtue is not to be practiced;
> if practiced there is no buddhahood.
> Neither is sin to be renounced;
> if renounced, buddhahood is not achieved.
> ibid.: 901

These unconventional practices of Buddhism resemble those of "mad monks" in the Chinese Ch'an tradition, such as Jigong, the twelfth-century Chinese monk mentioned previously, who indulged in eating meat and drinking wine. Jigong and monks like him transgressed both social norms and monastic rules. The difference between the historical "mad monks" and Nyingma masters' double transgression is that, as Bernard Faure points out, the Ch'an "mad monks" in fact exercised "controlled madness" in that "generally speaking, not only do these 'crazy monks' know the limits of transgression, but transgression itself seems to be inscribed within precise ritual and social contexts" (Faure 1998:101); therefore, these mad monks were rare. However, in Nyingmapa's history, transcendental "madness" has been an accepted normality. In the spiritual sense, to transgress means to transcend, and to transcend, likewise, requires transgression. To many Nyingmapa teachers, to preach the non-dualistic liberation while being continually caught in the dualities of this conventional world is only lip service and does not reflect one's spiritual merit. Dondrub Tsering, a Tibetan scholar of Nyingmapa, points out:

> Nyingmapa does not treat purity and defilement as two opposites. In essence, they are the same. Therefore, each cannot be isolated from the other as if they are opponents to each other. Bodily lust is a path to liberation. The greater the corporal pleasure is, the more blissful one's spiritual practice may become. Defilement is only washed away by defilement itself. This is the path leading one to the ultimate bliss of enlightenment.
> Dondrub Tsering 1999:103

The different lineages of *dzogchen tulkus* all, one way or another, possess teachings about enlightened madness. The Dudjom lineage in particular emphasizes

the imperative of this madness in one's practice. "The Calling of the Lama from Afar," a prayer frequently sung by Khandrol Lhajam, is an invocation of the lived experience of the sublime madness in the lineage. *Smyon* (སྨྱོན། madness) in the prayer, is inherently associated with the state of enlightenment which is "neither good or bad" (Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje 1992:28). Herein, being mad is synonymous with the instant, naked exposure of one's primordial nature before letting social rules and norms determine its outward expression. Smyoshil, the name of Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's monastery, was named as such because of the enlightened madness of his previous incarnation, Khenpo Ngawang Palzang. The discordance of Akha Choyang's carefree, vagabond-like appearance with his monastic status as the abbot of a large monastery is regarded as a form of the sublime madness in contemporary Golok. These cases exemplify the imperative of this unique spiritual madness.

In this respect, the function of *tulkus* is not merely to carry on the teachings of their lineages but, ideally speaking, is also supposed to be personification of the enlightened state of being. On one hand, a *tulku* is a spiritual system embodied in a concrete person. On the other hand, he or she is a metaphor rather than a person. "Metaphor" here is constituted with what Paul Ricoeur calls "displacement" (Ricoeur 1977:3), which in a Nyingmapa context refers to the *tulku*'s transgressive displacement of the outer reality to the innermost realm – where one encounters the naked, unmediated state of enlightenment. In other words, meeting a Nyingma *tulku* is not meeting a person, but rather meeting *dzogchen* or the Great Perfection itself. However, this metaphoric displacement from person to the state of enlightenment or from the outer to the inner does not pin down what this great perfect enlightenment is. It is metaphorized rather than concretized as a substance. Obviously the metaphoric function of *tulkus* is to build bridges between thoughts of different natures and between divergent inner contexts. A *tulku*, as a metaphor, thus moves between one state of being and another for the purpose of transforming the state of *marigpa* (མ་རིག་པ། ignorance) to the state of *sangpa* (སངས་པ། thorough awareness) – just as the *etymon*, *tulpa* (སྤྲུལ་པ། to transform) suggests.

As a metaphor, a *tulku* is also a temporal bridge linking the present to the past. He is a narrative with the temporal sequences of his successive incarnations in the past, rewinding a specific history of Buddhist enlightenment from himself back to his predecessors. No matter how much Nyingma lineages vary from one another, they all converge back to Padmasambhava, other historical tantric masters, and finally to Shakyamuni Buddha. In this sense, a *tulku* is a trans-life story of Buddhist enlightenment in concrete personalized terms. He is a denouement thematically linking together all saints of his lineage, and yet the expression of his enlightened state differs from those of his predecessors; thus it adds to the diversely manifest spiritual accomplishments of Nyingma virtuosos. In his lifetime a *tulku* brings forth another climax and another conclusion of the trans-life narrative of tantric enlightenment situated within that lineage. From this perspective the lineage of a *tulku* as a religio-spiritual system is a flux of multiple denouements of enlightenment in different individual incarnations. Each *tulku* thus is a unity of these denouements in different lifetimes including his own. To those who

take discipleship with *tulku*, he is a triad of mythos–mimesis–catharsis. When the distinct plot of the *tulku*'s lineage is narrated, that *tulku* becomes the representation of the enlightenment stories of all his previous incarnations; thus, the manifested climax of this spiritual representation is often evidenced in the *tulku*'s charismatic appeals to his devotees, as well as in the devotees' emotional currents, including uninhibited weeping and sobbing. These emotional expressions, in particular, reconfirm the lineage's spiritual potency for purifying, healing, and enlightening the devotees.

Tulkus, when metaphorized as *mana*-figures, are not as mystery-shrouded as their Melanesian elder counterparts. A *tulku*'s *mana* is the recollection of his predecessors' spiritual achievements – not something mysteriously penetrating objects and persons for strategic inter-personal manipulation. *Tulkus*' *mana* is patterned on the life history of Shakyamuni Buddha. This pattern is what Charles Prebish deems to be points of the "prerealization" and "postrealization" of the historical Buddha (Prebish 1995:653–4). The former refers to his path toward final enlightenment and the latter to his promulgation of Buddha Dharma with his visionary and supernatural power. In this sense, a *tulku* is a Buddhist archetype exemplifying five ideal types of enlightened persons – "*buddha*, *pratyekabuddha*, *arhant*, *bodhisattva*, and *siddha*" (ibid.:651). In both Mahayana and Vajrayana contexts, among these five types, bodhisattva and siddha are most congruent with the spiritual state of a *tulku*. This is because his or her choice to undertake rebirth in the sentient world, rather than in an enlightened realm such as Zangdog Palris (Padmasambhava's pureland), coincides with the deeds of a bodhisattva whose *siddhi*, or spiritual attainment, is vowed to benefit all sentient beings. The lives of *tulkus* are thus meant to re-personalize and re-embody these prototypes of Buddhist enlightenment. In the Tibetan-specific context, the tantric dimension of *tulkus*, especially in the history of Nyingmapa, adds a more animated content to their typology. Nyingma *tulkus*' direct association with Padmasambhava is largely that which animates their personhoods and their living environments, as textual and folk narratives of Padmasambhava emphasize his supernatural abilities, i.e. flying, lifting mountains, communicating with the spirit worlds, penetrating objects, and making himself stealthy. Buddhist enlightenment, as represented by Nyingma *tulkus*, is highly animated so as to demonstrate that enlightenment is not a thing that can be physically or mentally grasped. It is metaphorized as the boundless sky or the primordial purity of sentience. It is omnipresent even when one is not aware of it. It is the enclosure that encloses everything including both states of enlightenment and sentience. In essence, this all-encompassing enclosure is what the Buddha called "emptiness." Everything encompassed in this unending emptiness is an illusion. Perhaps that is why the second Dudjom Lingpa often referred to himself as "a dancer in the illusion" (Dudjom Lingpa 2002:181) when he was alive.

In the twenty-first century, more and more non-Tibetan pilgrims – especially from Han China – stream into Tibet seeking the wonders of tantric methods of enlightenment. What they are searching for already exists within their inner selves; however, they apparently do not possess a methodic approach to understanding

that, as their Tibetan masters do. Non-Tibetan Buddhists' quest could be likened to the manner in which *tertons* (hidden treasure revealer) reveal *termas* (hidden treasure). The *terma* of enlightenment is hidden in the mind-stream of the pilgrim, but the search itself is a journey of a long distance and to a high altitude. It is a process of recognizing both the topographies of one's mind and those of the Tibetan masters' homeland, and, finally, learning to dance in the emptiness of all illusions.

3 Spirit mountains, sacred sites, and territorial charisma

In the summer of 2004, Lungdok Rinpoche and his Han Chinese disciples were returning to his home monastery at Rachekyi (ར་ཆག་སྐྱེ།) Village in Chekha (ཁྲི་ཀ། Guide) County of Qinghai Province after having journeyed to Sertar for a *dzogchen* initiation. While making our way back to Chekha, we visited Hwaldan Tashi, the young reincarnation of the late Siddhe Lama. We lodged in the late Siddhe Lama's retreat shrine for three days. Every late afternoon many older nomads circumambulated the shrine; however, Siddhe Lama was not the exclusive center of their devotional act. Many of them also turned toward Amni Machen with full prostrations on the grounds of the shrine. The highest mountain in Amdo is named after Amni Machen (ཨ་མྱེས་རྨ་ཆེན།), a warrior spirit and Dharma protective deity. The mountain's significance is not only religious but also cultural and psychological, for local nomads. Early one evening, I asked a man who had just completed his daily devotional prostration to Amni Machen why the mountain was so important to him. He answered, "I have to see Amni Machen every day and can't live without it." Lungdok Rinpoche later explained to me that Amni Machen is also *bla-ri* (བླ་རི། pronounced as *la*), meaning "soul-place" or "soul mountain." According to local folklore, the mountain hosts the soul of King Gesar (གེ་སར།), the legendary heroic king of Tibet, as well as the souls of common nomads who were born and raised in the area. In addition to its lofty soteriological doctrines, the practice of Tibetan Buddhism on the folk level is inherently manifested in the ritualized, sentient tie between people, the earth, and local spirits and deities. In this highly animated interaction among people- and place-based supernatural forces, the landscape of Tibet itself emanates its own charismatic charms.

This chapter is a backdrop for subsequent interpretations in later chapters of why currently increasing numbers of non-Tibetan pilgrims are drawn to Tibet, and especially to Nyingma communities. Herein, I discuss the manner in which the charisma of many Nyingma *tulkus* is intimately connected with the landscape upon which their communities are situated. "Landscape," in this chapter, refers to both human dwelling space and the natural environment mostly free of human physical alteration. Landscape, here, is an integral part of human religious and ecological consciousness. Landscape, in the Tibetan context, is the total earthly space inclusive of not only humans, animals, and plants, but more critically also of the spirit world embedded within it. Thus this particular type of landscape, from the perspective of religious studies, is saturated with natural, supernatural, and spiritual forces.

Many locations of Nyingma *tulkus* are regarded as what many scholars call "power place[s]" (Ivakhiv 2001; Michaels 2003; Rozelle 2006). When this type of power is translated into the terms of charisma studies, it pertains not merely to the spiritual-religious power of the concerned personality, but even more crucially to the power of the natural environment and the eco-religious system of the charismatic personality and his community. In this chapter I intend to illustrate the complex reciprocal saturation of human communities, spirits/gods, Buddha Dharma, and natural landscapes which are marked with religious significance. I will expound upon a phenomenon I have chosen to articulate as a certain "territorial charisma" within the communities of Nyingma *tulkus* based on a humanized and personified landscape which is animated with local spirits, deities, ghosts, demonic beings, and finally with the spiritual influence of Buddha Dharma. This territorial charisma is understood as power-authority in a plural sense, because it is not single-sourced or as neatly organized as the lineage authority of a given *tulku*; instead it is multi-sourced in a place-based, free-flowing state, and yet subject to the harness of a human community in service of varied volitions and practical goals.

With my illustration of the territorial charisma of the communities of Nyingma *tulkus*, I wish to make two arguments pertaining to the studies of Tibetan sacred sites and the anthropology of religion and ecology. First, among existing scholarly works regarding Tibetan sacred sites, the idea of the sacred is often described vertically in both physical and theological senses. Sacred sites are mostly affirmed as places of spiritual transcendence, and are thus portrayed as other-worldly. In my understanding, sacred sites in Tibet, especially places with human settlements, often manifest themselves more horizontally and in a communal fashion, connecting religious elders, common people, local spirits, and natural landscapes. I call such communality the "inter-sentience" of sacred sites. I thus emphasize the worldly dynamics of sacred sites, rather than their transcendent qualities. Second, in my discussion of the inter-sentience of the powers of Buddhism, humans, spirits, and the natural landscape, I reaffirm Roy Rappaport's viewpoint that rituals, which are performed as responses to natural and supernatural forces, produce practical results rather than containing themselves only in psychological and other-worldly domains. Both arguments are intended to affirm that whether personality-based or place-based, charisma as a type of authority is socially and culturally expressed regardless of its doctrinal or spiritual premise. Meanwhile, these arguments are also meant to pluralize the concept of the sacred site in Tibetan studies because of the sentient-orientation and ecological manifestations of Tibetan religious communities, be they monumental or lesser known.

Spiritized landscape of Tibet

In contemporary scholarly writings and landscape photography regarding Tibetan sacred mountains, pilgrimage destinations of impressively high altitude, such as Gang Rinpoche (གངས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། Mt. Kailash) and Mt. Kawa Karpo (ཁ་བ་དཀར་པོ།) are primary images representing the sacredness of the Tibetan landscape. Their seasonal attraction for pilgrims and tourists leave them on a social margin of a common pilgrimage phenomenon recognized by many scholars, notably Toni Huber (2008), Alex

McKay (1998), Raimon Panikkar (1996), and others. Their physical formations are characteristically upward, corresponding to the perceived vertical transcendence of their religious significance. Their physical and transcendental verticality determines how their sacredness is identified against their allegedly profane counterparts, or anything which remains low. A pilgrimage to these vertically awe-inspiring sites is often considered "an ultimate pilgrimage" (Panikkar 1996:51). Therefore, the potential for sacredness is only recognized in the upward direction. Downwardness is synonymous with the diminution of sacredness. Axel Michaels' *The Sacredness of Himalayan Landscapes* is representative of this popular scholarly perspective towards Tibetan sacred sites, as he asserts,

> it is the DOWNS that determine the UP as a completely different world: UP is the realm of the gods, from UP the first kings often come, UP the ancestors reside; UP is the pure world: whoever is UP has the sovereign authority; UP is health – one thinks of mountain resorts – and pureness, but not social intermixture or every day life, UP is salvation. Salvation comes from above, this catabasis is probably universal.
>
> 2003:17

Michaels' work, like that of many of his peers, focuses on what is known in Tibetan as *gnas ri* (གནས་རི།) which is commonly translated as sacred mountain. *Gnas ris* are often monumental and pillar-like, reaching into heavens where gods reside according to Tibetan mythology. In both physical and theological senses, *gnas ri* fits a human religious universal; that is, that transcendence is vertically otherworldly and thus it is implied that anything this-worldly is the opposite of the sacred. This perspective seems to coincide with the Judeo-Christian dichotomized image of the cosmos, that is, the separation of divinity and humanity, and the upwardness of the monotheistic god and the downwardness of the profane human realm. The apex of the vertically impressive mountain is therefore regarded as an "opening" (Eliade 1959:26), bridging the human realm with the gods' or serving as a boundary separating each from the other. This corresponds with biblical images of Jacob's ladder and the Tower of Babel, through which God's salvation and recognition of human pride can only be transferred from above.

Gnas ris are impressive on the expansive landscape of Tibet. Their identities and religious functions are in fact not limited to the verticality of transcendence. *Gnas ri*, as a generic term, signifies not only the sacred contents of a religious site but also refers to places where *lha* (ལྷ། deities/spirits), *klu* (ཀླུ། dragon-like spirits), and *zhedek* (གཞི་བདག earthly spirits) reside. Among these, there are demonic ones which affect the health of humans in both material and spiritual terms. Etymologically, the word *gnas* (གནས།) includes, but does not remain limited to, the idea of the sacred. It refers to physical locations where spiritual or supernatural power is deeply received, usually because of solitary practices of past saints and of their association with indigenous supernatural beings and Buddhist protective deities. Thus, many *gnas ris* could be also called "spirit mountains." Furthermore, many *gnas ris* are also known as *bla-ri* (བླ་རི།) or soul mountains – mythologically or historically chosen places to which prominent figures and common people entrusted their *bla* (བླ།) or souls. Thus, *gnas*

ris' earth-bound identities are horizontally rendered as sentient- and ecologically-oriented. Their primary earthly function obviously provides communities of humans and other species with nesting options that best situate themselves in the equilibrium of transcendence, fertility, healing, and ecological health.

In this respect, it does not do justice to lump all *gnas ris* together as "sacred" mountains from the Western perspective. The topography of the mountains is coupled with the typography of and narratives concerning local pantheons and Buddhist Dharma protective deities. Thus the mountainous landscape of Tibet, especially the mountains whose names are known among their human dwellers, is animated with a range of spirits and deities. The landscape is no longer merely physical, but embodies a variety of *bla* (souls) and *lha* (spirits/deities) as well. It is most fitting to address this special type of landscape as a spiritized mountainous landscape. On it, mountains and spirits are synonymous with each other, and, meanwhile, they are an inherent part of Tibetan religio-cultural history.

There are countless mountains in Tibet; however, both scholarly research and folk narratives agree that the ancestors of named mountains in Tibet are the Nine Mountains/Deities of Tibet, or *srid pa chags pa'i lha dge* (སྲིད་པ་ཆགས་པའི་ལྷ་དགུ). Namely, the Nine Deities comprise Ode Gungyel (འོ་དེ་གུང་རྒྱལ།), Nyenchen Tanglha (གཉན་ཆེན་ཐང་ལྷ།), Yarlha Shompo (ཡར་ལྷ་ཤམ་པོ།), Machen Pomra (རྨ་ཆེན་སྤོམ་ར། Amni Machen), Nodchan Gangzang (གནོད་སྦྱིན་གང་བཟང་།), Sygogchen Ldongra (སྒོགས་ཆེན་ལྡོང་ར།), Zhoglha Shugpo (ཞོགས་ལྷ་ཕྱུག་པོ།), Gampo Lhakye (སྒམ་པོ་ལྷ་རྩེ།), and Jowo Yugyel (ཇོ་བོ་གཡུལ་རྒྱལ). Among them, Ode Gungyel was the father of all other eight mountain spirits. Standing in southern Üzang, currently Sangri County of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Ode Gungyel was also another name of Mutri Tsemp (མུ་ཁྲི་བཙན་པོ།), the second king of ancient Tibet (345–272BC). More notably, the ninth king was named after this mountain spirit. In turn, the personified image of mountain spirit Ode Gungyel, according to Tibetan folklore, appears as a heroic human king who wears a silk scarf, a silk cloak, and a large turquoise wrist band; he holds a long spear decorated with colorful banner; and rides a handsome stallion.

Next to Ode Gungyel, Yarlha Shompo was once a Bon deity. According to local folk stories in Kham and Amdo, he once transformed himself into a human while visiting the earth. When local Tibetans saw this tall, handsome, king-like man, they asked where he came from. Yarlha Shompo silently pointed to the sky as his answer. Everyone happily accepted him as a son of the heaven and enthroned him as King Chatri Tsempo (68–31BC). According to Gele's reading of *Dunhuang Yik Rnying* (ཏུན་ཧོང་ཡིག་རྙིང་། Duanhuang Tibetan historical texts), the original appearance of Yarlha Shompo was a white yak as tall as a mountain. His red horns were as sharp as spears. His eyes emitted green light. When he became wrathful, snow avalanches would pour out of his mouth and nostrils, turning the blue sky into a dark abyss (Gele 2004:267). He was a fierce deity of the indigenous Bon religion. When Trisong Detsen became the king of Tibet (755–797), he began to support the growth of Buddhism. This angered Yarlha Shompo, who instantly initiated floods and epidemics. Common folk began to lose their confidence in Buddhism. Trisong Detsen then invited Padmasambhava from India to subdue this uncontrollable mountain spirit. With his tantric power, Padmasambhava converted Yarlha Shompo into a *choskyong srungma* (ཆོས་སྐྱོང་སྲུང་མ།) or Dharma protector, and transformed his appearance from a white yak to

a white man, whose left hand holds a short spear with rainbow-like banners on the handle and whose right hand holds a crystal sword. Since then he has only answered invocations originating for Buddhist purposes (ibid.:271).

The folk narratives about these two mountain spirits are identical in genre, in terms of their earlier Bon associations, Buddhist conversions, and warrior-like appearances. The monumental images of Ode Gungyel and Yarlha Shompo mark lineages of both Tibetan royal ancestors and their protective deities. The other seven mountain spirits are similarly spiritized and personified. In his *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz gives detailed descriptions of Tibet's mountain deities who have spiritized numerous mountains of the entirety of cultural Tibet (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975).

What is relevant in this chapter is that the power of territorial charisma occurs upon a landscape that hosts the interplay of spirits, the people, the ecological environment, and Buddhist practices. The acts of all players are more this-worldly than other-worldly oriented. Their interactive nature is often devoid of verticality, and thus non-transcendental in the soteriological sense; however, it most definitely expresses itself in emotional currents of sentience, in terms of the continuity of a people and the land on which they have lived and reproduced. In this respect, the fecundity of the humanized spirits and spiritized humans, as well as their immediate ecological environments, are the crucial themes of this unique territorial charisma in Tibet. In both folk narratives and written history, Tibetan mountain spirits and people have a shared genealogy or a "blood relation." This place-based charisma engenders a type of topophilia, or "an affective bond between people and place" (Tuan 1974). In the Tibetan context, this bond is not (only) induced by aesthetically pleasing topography but has much to do with the parallel advancement of the Tibetan population and mountain spirits outward from Üzang (Central Tibet) to Kham and Amdo. The power of the land and the power of people have thus been interlocked since the mythical times of Tibet. The land marks both histories of spirits and people. In turn, the people commemorate the spirits embodied in the land, while the spirits protect the people when they are invoked. Mountains are no longer only mountains, but spirits themselves. This is where most Nyingma *tulkus*' communities are situated.

In interpreting the meaning of *gnas* (གནས།) as a unique type of human eco-religious environment, inclusive of both vertical sacredness and horizontal sentience, I find Rappaport's concepts of ultimate sacred postulates and cosmological axioms are particularly useful. According to Rappaport, "ultimate sacred postulates" refer to religious and spiritual beliefs that are "beyond empirical falsification or objective verification" and are "those crowning bodies of religious discourse taken to be unquestionable" (Rappaport 1999:281), whereas "cosmological axioms" refer to "assumptions concerning the fundamental structure of the universe or, to put it differently, … refer to the paradigmatic relationships in accordance with which the cosmos is constructed" (Rappaport 1979:118). Obviously this relationship indicates that ultimate sacred postulates, because of their unquestionable status, sanctify and certify human acts in the empirical world, while cosmological axioms are empirically recognizable. As Rappaport puts it, "First and most obviously, ultimate sacred postulates are typically devoid of material significata, whereas

cosmological axioms are concerned with relationships among qualities that may themselves be sensible (e.g. hot and cold) and that are manifested in physical and social phenomena" (ibid.:119).

My use of these two concepts from Rappaport's anthropology of religion and ecology is meant to articulate the order of things religious, cultural, and ecological in a Tibetan context. Obviously, in a Nyingma community there are spiritual and institutional hierarchies. Buddha Dharma is the ultimate sacred postulate, while everything else is ordered with locally conceived, but Buddhist-oriented, cosmological axioms regarding the manner in which the relationships between humans, spirits, and the earth are maintained. Furthermore, these hierarchies are not stagnant; they are in motion and may sometimes be reordered. They are invoked and channeled for a variety of worldly purposes. When a human community is situated on the landscape of *gnas ri* (གནས་རི། sacred/spirit sites), that community and its ecological environment are animated with both natural and supernatural forces. The sentience of both humans and spirits is thus breathed into the landscape.

Eco-theophanic landscape of Nyingma community

Rachekyi Village is the physical location of Lungdok Rinpoche's home monastery. As a community of Nyingma *ngapas* (སྔགས་པ།), or tantric yogis in eastern Amdo, the village is literally in the embrace of spirit mountains that are genealogically related to Amni Machen (ཨ་མྱེས་རྨ་ཆེན།) in Golok, one of the nine original spirit mountains of Tibet. This lay tantric community has a history of over six hundred years. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Lungdok Rinpoche was enthroned as the abbot and he converted the temple into a monastery. Regardless of the modern provincial highway winding through the valley and the mushrooming of small businesses owned by Muslims and Han Chinese, the landscape of Rachekyi retains much of its original structure; that is, the structure of a village surrounded by four spirit mountains as the integral part of its human settlement. Looking at Rachekyi Village from the highway in the valley, one would not think it to be a particularly awesome scenic site, as the dry soil lacks vegetation. However, as one walks up to any one of the four spirit mountains, Rachekyi begins to show itself as a gem in the arms of the surrounding mountains. The arid soil and the bustling shops in the valley become insignificant. Lungdok Rinpoche often likens the landscape of Rachekyi to a lotus flower: the mountains are the lotus petals while the village is the lotus ovary. Lotus flowers, common Buddhist symbols, are a frequent metaphor for many Nyingma communities. The late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy is also referred to as a lotus flower. This Buddhist (re-)sacralization of the Tibetan landscape has been a relatively recent phenomenon; to local *ngapas* and their families, the place of Rachekyi is more than a lotus flower. It is animated with mountain spirits, not only in the physical landscape but in the human psyche as well.

The four mountains surrounding Rachekyi are Ami Kodtse (ཨ་མྱེས་རྐོད་རྩེ།) in the north, Ama Tsochel (ཨ་མ་མཚོ་འཁྱིལ།) in the east, Ami Dobdan (ཨ་མྱེས་སྡོབས་ལྡན།) in the south, and Ami Domri (ཨ་མྱེས་ལྡོམ་རི།) in the west. These are all names of deities and spirits. Other than Ama Tsochel, who is a female spirit, the rest of the mountain spirits are

personified as male *dgra-lha* (དགྲ་ལྷ།), or warrior spirits. Ami Kodtse, as the dominant *dgra-lha*, is described in human form as a warrior who wears a thick felt hat, in a commanding pose on horseback with a shield in his right hand, and a vase filled with treasures in his left hand. Ami Dobdan and Ami Domri are similar in appearance. The former rides a brown stallion with a shield in his right hand and a treasure vase in his left hand, while the latter rides a white yak and holds the same items in his hands. Ama Tsochel, as a female spirit, is well-revered at Rachekyi. According to local narratives, she appears as a beautiful lady who rides a doe. She wears an exquisite bonnet under which her lush black hair is worn coiled in a bun shaped like a dark green conch shell. She holds no weapon but a gorgeous treasure vase.

The prefixes "Ami" and "Ama" respectively refer to "grandfather" and "mother." When used along with the names of mountain spirits, they mean "elder" or "respected one." Two of the four mountain spirits of Rachekyi are related to Tibet's nine original mountain spirits. Ami Kodtse is a son of Amni Machen. Ami Domri, a son of Yarlha Shompo, was expelled from Central Tibet because of his violation of law in the spirit-world. He is also known as Domshee (ལྡོམ་སྲས།) or wandering son. He then wandered through many places and finally settled down in Rachekyi. The meaning of his name coincides with the local folk story about him. *Dom* (ལྡོམ།) means wandering and roaming, while *shee* (སྲས།) means son. Thus, Ami Domri is a wandering son of Yarlha Shompo.

Ama Tsochel is a specifically local goddess. According to local oral history, there was once a blue lake on the top of Ama Tsochel. This collective memory also corresponds to this beautiful goddess' name: *tso* (མཚོ།) as lake, and *chel* (འཁྱིལ།) as "coming together." Neither was Ami Dobdan a formal Tibetan deity. He was the protective spirit of Shanba Miridzi, the minister of the Hor (ཧོར།) Kingdom. In Tibetan mythology, the Hors were the enemy of legendary King Gesar. The Hors, in the recent history of Tibet, are an actual ethnic group known as "Tu Nationality" in Chinese. Minister Shanba Miridzi, according to Rachekyi's oral history, had a cabin for solitary meditation built at the current location of Rachekyi's temple on the foothill of Dobdan. Looking at the current geographic distribution of ethnic groups in eastern Amdo, the Hors mostly reside on the northeastern edge of the region. It could be inferred that the arrival of Tibetans approximately six hundred years ago pushed out the Hors from the current location, while their protective spirit was Tibetanized and has been well-tended since then.

Characteristically these mountain spirits are highly humanized in terms of their sentient emotions, as they are mostly classified as beings from the deva-realm, one of the six sentient realms of the Buddhist cosmos. For instance, Ami Kodtse and Ami Domri both fell in love with Ama Tsochel. As neither of them wished to give in, they had a battle over Ama Tsochel. Ami Domri's arrow shot Ami Kodtse in the head. Ami Kodtse retaliated by cutting Ami Domri into two halves with his sword. This folk story does not end here but continues with the impact of this love-induced battle on the actual Tibetan communities in the surrounding area. In reality, the lower part of Ami Domri looks like an open belly; however, folks at Rachekyi prefer to look at it as an open vagina. Coincidentally a nearby Gelukpa monastery which faces the "open vagina" has not been successful in keeping its

young monks. It is said that the average length of a young monk's residence is two years. Many former monks married local girls from villages in the vicinity. The cause of the monks' returning to lay life has been attributed to Ami Domri's suggestive shape. The population of this Gelukpa monastery may fluctuate with fresh recruits; however, it has not risen beyond a handful of old monks.

The folk classification of mountain spirits and deities is not clear-cut. It is a process of hybridization, a combination of both Bon and Buddhist influences. Strictly speaking, mountain spirits belonged to the pre-Buddhist, indigenous pantheon of Bon-dominated Tibet. Their Buddhist transformation occurred in less than a thousand years. According to *klu-vbum-ghar-po* (ཀླུ་འབུམ་དཀར་པོ། The Spread of the Spirits), a Bon text recording the native pantheon, *btsan* (བཙན།), *ngyan* (གཉན།), and *klu* (ཀླུ།), the three types of spirits, respectively rule the three-layered world, namely, the heavens, the earth, and the under-world (Gele 2004:268). According to Bon religious tradition, *btsan*, *ngyan*, and *klu* are the *nam-zhes* (རྣམ་ཤེས།) or the souls of humans and non-human beings who possess supernatural powers. As they do not have fixed physical forms, they often find their dwellings in natural objects, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, and the sky, or in things that are large and unpredictable enough to overwhelm humans and animals. Among the three types of the spirits, *ngyan* and *klu* are most popularly invoked. *Ngyan* lives in mountains, while *klu* dwells in rivers, lakes, and beneath the earth. Most Tibetan mountain spirits are *ngyan* and *klu*, both of which are said to control rainfalls, floods, droughts, hail, snowstorms, and other natural forces. These natural forces are also invoked and directed by humans in the waging of wars. That is why many mountain spirits are also *dgra-lha*, or spirits who defeat their enemies.

Except for Ama Tsochel, all mountain spirits of Rachekyi are *dgra-lhas*. The worldly function of *dgra-lhas* extends from their warriorship and control of natural forces to the status of *bla-ri* (བླ་རི།), or soul mountain. *Bla-ri* refers to a high ground to which souls of people and any other sentient beings are entrusted. Oftentimes the soul entrusted is not a soul of the deceased but of the living. Living beings, according to Tibetan life-science, have two kinds of "soul," namely *nam-zhes* (རྣམ་ཤེས།) and *bla* (བླ།). *Nam-zhes* is often translated as "mind" or "consciousness" attaching to one's body, while *bla* is translated as "soul." In the West, soma and anima mutually saturate each other when one is alive, but depart upon death. However, *bla* freely moves beyond one's bodily confinement when one is alive. In Tibetan myths such as that of King Gesar, when one's *bla* is well hidden elsewhere, one is often indestructible by an enemy. The life and death of *bla* determine the life and death of the person. This is an inversion of the modern medical definition of life and death. In this respect, when a spirit mountain is regarded as a *bla-ri*, its significance is even deeper than its power for humans' earthly needs. It spiritually and psychologically connects itself directly with its human community. It both protects and is protected. Amni Machen is said to be the *bla-ri* where King Gesar's soul is anchored. In ritualized narrations about this legendary king among nomads in Golok, Amni Machen is the sacred ground protected by King Gesar's subjects. Everything on the mountain is the material expression of King Gesar's soul: trees are not to be felled; streams are not to be contaminated; and animals are not to be hunted. When a *bla-ri* is not protected from its enemy's attack, its

destruction also leads to the destruction of the person whose soul is entrusted to the mountain. In the Gesar epic, while the *bla* of King Gesar itself was well protected, the King knew how to destroy the enemies of Tibet by locating and destroying the objects or animals in which the souls of the enemies were hidden. In Sonam Dorje's research on the ecological aspect of King Gesar folklore in Golok, he draws an equation between *bla-ri*, local eco-systems, and life. The death of one element consequently signifies the death of the others (Sonam Dorji 2002:40).

In this regard, the places which are chosen as sites of Nyingma communities are not merely inanimate physical terrain; instead, they are animated with pre-Buddhist spirits and deities with Buddhist orientation. The landscapes of most Nyingma monastic and lay communities in Kham and Amdo clearly bond together humans, spirits, and local ecosystems. Humans' topophilia, in this context, is not just an affective bond between nature and humans. It is not merely borne of the aesthetic value of the material, inanimate environment from which humans indulge themselves in "a delight in the feel of air, water, and earth" (Tuan 1974:93). Rather, it signifies a total relationship of the sentient world in which natural, supernatural, and spiritual powers are in contiguity, interaction, counteraction, and communion.

Among ecological anthropologists, an environment is often understood with an operational model and a cognized model. According to Rappaport, the former is based on an etic (outsider's) perspective and the latter on emic (insider's) perspective. The "operational model" accords with "the assumptions and methods of the objective sciences, in particular the science of ecology" (Rappaport 1979:97). The "objective," or "etic," position of the "operational model" permits the emergence of scientifically conceived "ecological objects" (Keller and Golley 2000:23) for quantitative analyses. From the perspective of the cultural history of modern science, the "objectivity" of modern science rests itself upon the subjective cultural values of the modern West, which fundamentally separate humans from nature. Land then exists only in the physical sense. Formally, this ecological worldview resembles the Judeo-Christian worldview in terms of the separation of divinity from humanity and of the sacred from the profane.

On the ground level, the exercise of the operational model is no longer only a scientific activity but ultimately becomes a power issue in which the remapped native environment becomes a utilitarian resource. In this age of globalization, many "emic" social and cultural activities of small tribes or large nations are in fact results of their internalization of etic value systems – especially those of modern scientific value. In this respect, the environment of every human community is cognized. There are no exceptional cases. The modern science-based educational system of China teaches children the geography of China with an emphasis on the natural resources in various regions of the nation. This is a cognitive process in which the modern worldview replaces a traditional Chinese worldview which does not divorce humans from nature. In the eyes of Navajo Indians, rocks are not just rocks but also abodes of spirits, and "animals are really humans with a different outer form" (McPherson 1991:25, 62). Tibetans similarly see their land saturated with different kinds of spirits and deities. Modern urbanites experience instead their separation from nature. Whether one is modern and scientifically oriented or more traditionally minded, the earth remains as it is but is cognized and related to in the context of one's ecological

worldview. This is what Rappaport calls the "cognized model," which is "a description of a people's knowledge of their environment and of their beliefs concerning it" (Rappaport 1979:97) and is that which "encodes values" (ibid.:101).

In this sense, physical landscape or natural environment is not a background before which human actions take place; instead it is a foreground, or an integral part of an event-making process in an entire given ecosystem, as "the total of ecological populations and nonliving substances bound together" (Rappaport 1979:61) in both material and psychological exchanges. Through the lens of religion, a physical environment is a "cognized environment" (ibid.:6) in which everything exists in an ordered relationship. When ecology implies "ecological worldview" emphasizing interactions and connectedness among sentient, non-sentient, animate and inanimate participants of an ecosystem, the "environment" is not simply a stage upon which organisms make their homes and from which they draw resources. It is not merely nature in the physical sense, divorced from human and supernatural domains, and therefore, "nature connotes everything apart from the supernatural, including the human in all its manifestations – art, culture, civilization" (Keller and Golley 2000:11–12). As Rappaport remarks, "Nature is seen by humans through a screen of beliefs, knowledge, and purposes … it is upon nature itself that they do act, and it is nature itself that acts upon them, nurturing or destroying them" (Rappaport 1979:97). From a modern atheistic and scientific point of view, mountain spirits and Buddhist deities could be simply constructs of humans' mentally collective imagination; however, real or imagined, they have been in existence in human consciousness since ancient times. Their existence, to local Tibetans, signifies a kind of ultimate meaning without reference – or "being itself" (ibid.:157). Furthermore, the mountain spirits and Buddhist deities are an inherent part of the Tibetan idea of nature.

The Tibetan word for nature is *rangbyung* (རང་བྱུང་།), referring to the realm inclusive of both animate beings and inanimate things. It is inherently connected with *jekten* (འཇིག་རྟེན།) and *semjan* (སེམས་ཅན།). The former refers to the external world, while the latter signifies the inner realm of the sentient being. Obviously, without exception, Tibetans' ecological worldview is encoded with culturally and religiously specific values. The landscapes of many Nyingma communities are power-places, or "tangled webs" within which "the world is ever being created – shared and constituted through the imaginative, discursive, spatial, and material practices of humans reflectively immersed within an active and animate, more-than-human world" (Ivakhiv 2001:5). This is especially true of Tibetan landscapes in that mountains are regarded not only as conventional sacred sites but also as places where humans entrust their souls, as abodes of spirits that hold both natural and supernatural forces. The anima of the landscape and the psyche of the human thus become tangled, fused, and inseparable. Humans ensoul and spiritize the landscapes in which they live.

In his study of sacred space, Eliade remarked,

> For religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it … this spatial nonhomogeneity finds expression in the experience of an opposition between space that is sacred – the only real and real-ly existing space – and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it.
>
> Eliade 1959:20

This remark is the prelude to what Eliade calls "hierophany," or the manifestation of the sacred. The nonhomogeneity of sacred space, according to Eliade, is due to the "eruption" of the sacred into the profane realm. In the context of Nyingma communities, the Buddhist sacred and Tibetan indigenous spirit worlds were (are) not the same sudden and revelatory eruptions as the burning bush appearing in front of Moses – a classic example of hierophany in Western scholarly works. This type of sacred eruption comes characteristically from above and overpowers the human. In such visual and theological verticality, the sacred is only otherworldly. It touches the earth, coming from outside it, but does not make itself part of it. It thus parses everything it encounters into a duality of the sacred and the profane. These two poles beget a mutual exclusivity of divinity and humanity. In this conceptual framework, the location where the sacred erupts is thus qualified as an *axis mundi* as "the meeting point of heaven, earth, and hell" (Eliade 1959:12) in which all impurity and defilements have been completely purged. The sacred eruption is a pillar or a ladder leading humans up to the divine realm. This conceptual framework bears relevancy for our understanding of exceptionally high Tibetan sacred mountains such as Gang Rinpoche (Mt. Kailas) as they awesomely pierce up into the sky – which symbolizes "transcendence, force, eternity" and "exists absolutely because it is high infinite, eternal, and powerful" (ibid.:119).

In the living environment of many Nyingma communities, the power of the landscape is not monopolized in a monotheistic fashion. Such landscape of human settlement could be called an "Elysium," or place "where the favored spirits go" (Tuan 1974:114). It is more metaphorical and mythological than "topographical" (ibid.:1441). Especially when regarded as the embodiment of local spirits and deities, the landscape is synonymous with the cosmos of the community. Mountains and valleys are the homes of spirits. Caves are the wombs which reproduce spiritual saints. The topography of a Nyingma community is saturated with religious values and sentient emotions. *Topo*, in this context, is not just measured in such attributes as "high" and "low," or "wide" and "narrow;" instead, *topo* is as revered and feared as the spirits and deities themselves. The inner nature of sentience and the outer nature of the Earth are obviously bridged by the language of power, whether natural or supernatural. Both involve nearly everything in a horizontal relationship, i.e. humans, the land, vegetation, animals, and both the transcendence of Buddhist teachings and the worldly efficacy of spirits and deities, who have accompanied their human counterparts since mythological times.

Like Eliade's concept of sacred sites as vertical openings toward divinity above, spirit mountains in Rachekyi are also openings or passages from one mode of being to another (Eliade 1959:26). The difference lies in the Tibetan *gnas ri* signification of inter-sentient communications between humans, spirits, the earth, and cosmic Buddhas and bodhisattvas, such as Samantabhadra and Avalokiteshvara. What is noteworthy is that at the center of these multi-layered communications are the local spirits and deities embedded in the surrounding landscape. If the sacred sites of monotheistic religions are the sites of theophany or disclosure of God above, spirit mountains in Rachekyi are what I call eco-theophany, as they and their spirits choose to dwell in the local landscape and intimately bond with both

humans and non-humans. The eco-theophanic nature of many Nyingma communities lies in the lively traffic of natural, supernatural, and spiritual powers. These powers are mostly place-based and yet their openings and passages are initiated by humans. In this sense, the eco-theophanic landscape of Rachekyi is an "energy zone" (Ivakhiv 2001:228) which is full of sentient forces.

Mindscaping – inner nature of landscape

Rachekyi, as a site of eco-theophany, is an *oikos* or "home, not only of built houses, but of any dwelling place" (Liddell and Scott 1968:1204). It is a dwelling place of spirits, deities, and sentient beings including humans, in which humans are enspirited when they spiritualize their relationship with their living environment. Although the external destruction of the Tibetans' eco-religious landscape has lasted half a century, older residents and especially yogis nevertheless remember a different ecological scene of Rachekyi in the past. A seventy-five-year-old yogi-medicine man narrated the times prior to the introduction of China's socialism in the late 1950s:

> The commonality of the four spirit mountains here is that their names are also the names of the spirits that protect us. So, they are the homes of our protective spirits. Trees, grass, and animals are part of their families. We are not supposed to mine the mountains, fell trees, or hunt animals there. Our reverence to them brings us protection and help. I pray for their happiness every day. They are non-humans – spirits or ghosts. They have lived here since before I was born. They do not have bodies like humans', but move around as *nam-zhes* [རྣམ་ཤེས། consciousness or soul]. They kept our ancestors company, and live with us now, and will continue to exist in the future. When I was a boy, I began to imitate the ways in which my father and grandfather prayed for them, hanging prayer flags and spreading barley-wine to please them. When they are happy, we are happy, too. Our irreverence would bring us hail and sicknesses.
>
> I always feel our living environment should not have been changed. The mountains should exist as mountains; water should flow its natural courses; and the sky should show its true colors. When I was young, this place had many bears, wolves, leopards, deer, wild goats, and monkeys. We did not hunt these animals because we were taught to be compassionate toward other sentient beings, and because we were also afraid of angering the mountain spirits. These animals were like family members. Occasionally some villagers would hunt one or two animals but they did it in a thievish way because it was a shameful thing to do. Since 1958, these animals had been hunted.
>
> The mountains here were covered with thick forests and grass when I was growing up. There were many kinds of vegetation. Every summer I tagged along with my grandfather up into the mountains, picking medicinal plants. This is how I learned to be a medicine man. Sometimes we had to kill a few snakes for medicinal purposes but we always gave reasons for the kill and apologized to the mountain spirits.

> The ridge across the valley down there used to be called "Where Deer Sleep," because it was the place where deer spent their nights. You see the fog-covered narrow basin below Ami Domri. It was called "The Valley of Resting Doe." That was where many doe gave birth to their young. Now the mountains don't have big animals – only jack rabbits. The trees were nearly all felled within the last forty years. The other side of Ami Domri used to be covered with juniper trees, but not anymore. You can still see the tree stumps there. We used to build houses with wood, and now we can't even find enough firewood. Trees on Ami Tsochel have slowly grown back, because the mountain used to have a lake on its top and there are still a few springs there.

Now most of the trees are gone. Soil erosion is commonplace at Rachekyi. The charm of the old times is no longer present; however, yogis and their families have relentlessly revitalized annual festivals honoring the mountain spirits, since the Chinese state allowed the renewal of Tibetan religions in the 1980s. In addition to their routine prayers at home, they have frequent ritual gatherings at the village temple throughout the year to communally pray for the mountain spirits. *Dugbar lubtse* (ལྡོག་བར་ལབ་ཙེ། New Year's offering to spirits) in January and *Denbe ghra-lha* (བདུན་པའི་དགྲ་ལྷ། Warrior spirit festival) in July are particularly filled with excitement involving the whole village. For *dugbar lubtse*, Lungdok Rinpoche and elder yogis lead villagers up to one of the four spirit mountains bringing blessed food and wine as offerings to the mountain spirits. *Dugbar* (ལྡོག་བར་།) means returning or completing a cycle (of a year), while *lubzi* (ལབ་ཙེ།) refers to the peak of the mountain where its spirit resides. Thus, bringing offerings up to the mountain is the high point of this New Year festival. Young men are organized to race on horseback up the mountain as the completion of the annual ritual.

Denbe ghra-lha is another ritually dramatic festival, in July. It lasts four days. For the first three days, yogis recite prayers and mantras in the village temple. As the festival is strictly devoted to warrior spirits, on the last day all men in the village ride horses and motorcycles up to Ami Kodtse. Some carry long spears on their shoulders, and others have colorful prayer flags in their hands. The sun and the moon are carved on the tip of the spears. The leading rider rides a black stallion, running ahead with *ghra-wo* (དགྲ་བོ། enemy, or an idol of an enemy). Everyone chases the *ghra-wo* until they catch it. At the end of the ritual, they bury the *ghra-wo* on the mountain, symbolizing the defeat of all their enemies and misfortunes in the year. Upon returning to the village, every yogi family inserts the images of the Four Forces (earth, water, fire, and wind) into a bull horn, marking the rejuvenation of life.

In the Kantian sense, the architectonic structure of a Nyingma community like Rachekyi is the work of mindscape over landscape, and vice versa. "Mindscape" refers to knowledge systems that give cultural and psychological meanings to the physical landscape. In turn, when the physical landscape is animated with cultural meanings, it is often received as an animated being who reciprocates human actions. In this regard, "Landscape – whether macrocosmography or local geography – is shaped, in the very act of our perceiving it, by our mindscape" (Kedar and Werblowsky 1998:10). In the Tibetan context,

the relationship between mindscape and landscape might have started with the manner in which humans projected their religion and cultural meanings onto the physical landscape in a remote time; however, after thousands of years, the landscape has become the mindscape itself – as it records the histories of Tibetan people and their pre-Buddhist and Buddhist pantheon. This religio-cultural reality is akin to the case of Sikkimese Buddhist landscapes studied by Vibha Arora. It highlights the embodiment of knowledge, identity, and authority in sacred landscapes (Arora 2006:56). In this sense, "a natural space always appears as a cultural landscape" (Seeland 1997:1). Nature thus is not independent from culture. The psyche of humans and the spirit of the landscape mutually penetrate each other.

In phenomenological studies of sacred landscapes, it is often humans who mark and make places with meanings (David and Wilson 2002). In the process of marking, it is humans who appear to have agency and power, whether cultural or religious. In my understanding of the Tibetan Nyingma case, the agency of humans is indicated in their naming of Tibet's monumental sites, such as Gang Rinpoche and Nyenchen Tanglha mountains. However, this type of historical record is derived from the mythical history of Tibet via the oral transmission of folklore. It is given that at an unspecified time of the ancient, mythological past, Tibetans marked the current sacred and spiritized mountains; however, from that time on, the marked landscape itself has also marked Tibetans who have lived there for countless centuries. If "all landscapes embody memories" (ibid.:6), the "consciousness" of a landscape speaks back to humans who have deposited their living experiences and even *bla*, or souls, to them. The landscape has been literally ensouled, spiritized, and animated by humans and their religious systems. Each human generation is "emplaced" and "marked" by the very landscape they live on. In this regard, the practice of Buddhism in Tibet is place-conscious, and not only in the form of rational understandings of Buddhist doctrines. The locations of practising communities and individuals are mostly places that are spiritized by local deities and empowered by saints of the past. These places allow people to trace the lineages of both their ancestors and spiritual masters.

Based on my ethnographic observation, in the reciprocity of mindscaping the land and landscaping the mind, humans and the earth possess their respective points of power and energy (Ivakhiv 2001). They exercise a mutual "attunement" to each other's power points (ibid.:52). When a Rachekyi yogi looks at the four spirit mountains, he is in an altered state of consciousness in which the mountains are not physical entities, but rather are spirits themselves. Humans and their landscapes are thus bonded with a reciprocal "energy connection" (ibid.:52), as Adrian Ivakhiv remarks, and sacred sites possess an energy "that could term a deva or guardian who can give or deny access to the site" (ibid.:54). This is evidenced in that Buddhist prayer texts for worldly purposes at Rachekyi are marked by the spirits of the landscape.

Rachekyi's ritual festivals honoring mountain spirits all involve recitation of *sangchod* (བསང་མཆོད།), or offering texts. Humans' topophilia and spirit-philia are lively elements in this type of text. Usually there are two types of *sangchod*. One

type broadly covers regional mountain spirits, while another specifically focuses on one mountain spirit. Rachekyi is a part of Chekha (Guide County) in Qinghai. The *sangchod* covering the spirits and deities in Chekha include both Rachekyi's and other villages' spirits. Passages in the most popular *sangchod* in the region go like this:

> Homage to the earth-gods of this place and to the lords of this sacred place:
> Ama Ngesongma, Dharma protective goddess of Rachekyi's Nyingma temple;
> Hwalden Lhamo, Dharma protective goddess of Gome Chotengyi Monastery (སྒོ་མེ་མཆོད་རྟེན་སྒི།) in Gome (སྒོ་མེ།);
> Lhachen Dbangchek (ལྷ་ཆེན་དབང་ཕྱུག་ Mahashvara), Dharma protective god of Dregmarnang Temple;
> King Perkar, the protective spirit of the thousand families in Garjed (དཀར་བརྗེད།).
>
> Praise to the warrior spirits of the mountains in all directions:
> Ami Kodtse in the north,
> Ama Sordgu (ཨ་མ་ཟོར་དགུ) in the north,
> Ami Gyinglha Megpo (ཨ་མྱེས་འགྱིང་ལྷ་སྨུག་པོ།) in the north,
> Ami Domri in the west,
> Ami Dobdan in the south,
> Ama Tsochel in the east.
>
> …
>
> We invoke all spirits and protective deities:
> You shine like the sun from all directions
> When dark clouds are covering us;
> You appear instantly from all directions
> When we encounter our enemies;
> When we need to seal the source of hurtful rumors;
> When we need to capture the head of our enemies;
> When we need to stop the advancing enemies;
> When we wish for what we desire.
> We serve you in our leisure;
> We call upon you when we are in need of your help.

In the text, people, land, and spirits are inter-connected. In this dynamic interconnection, especially in Tibet, where people are scarce while the land is overwhelmingly expansive, humans have developed ritualized communicative acts toward the spiritized earth to ensure peace and prosperity. In this sense, "ceremony reflects an attitude – a ritualistic appreciation of the sacred [landscape] – and attunement reflects the general goal of connection, wholeness, and resacralization of the world" (ibid.:54). There is mutuality of place and people: "Places become emplotted with [human] narratives" (ibid.:57), while humans become "emplotted" with the rules of the spirit world embodied in the landscape.

The ritualized order of territorial charisma

Rachekyi has little precipitation; however, when it falls, it is often in destructive forms: hails and heavy rainstorms. Most yogis at Rachekyi are also shamanic weather workers who detect destructive weather patterns and redirect them elsewhere. Unlike modern weather forecasting, which does not involve the spirit world, the formation of weather patterns at Rachekyi is determined by the activities of *glu*, a type of spirit dwelling in mountain springs, streams, rivers, and lakes. "The Knack of Storm Prevention" (སེར་བ་སྲུངས་བའི་སྔགས་བཞུགས་སོ། *ser-ba-sruangs-bavi-sngags-bzhugs-so*), a weather-reading text circulated among Rachekyi yogis, suggests:

> When dragons roar in the east, hail will come from the west and vice versa; when dragons roar in the south, hail will arise from the north and vice versa. … When dark clouds lie in front of the moon, hail will come down at midnight. When dragons roar under the clear sky, it means that demons and ghosts will drum up hail …

In actual shamanic weather forecasting, most yogis I worked with also rely on what their masters taught them based on empirical observation of the patterns of the clouds over the spirit mountains. Each year during sowing and pre-harvesting times in April and July, weather workers are most active in observing weather patterns and preventing hail and rainstorms. Each yogi takes a shift of "cloud herding." Literally he guards Rackekyi from a high point. The early shift starts at dawn, when the weather worker begins his cloud-surveying on the top of a hill. The commonly agreed weather prediction is that when dark clouds are mixed in the sunrise, hail usually comes from the west; when the sunrise is covered by red clouds, hail will come from horizons in all directions; when it is shrouded by yellow clouds, hail will appear in the afternoon. Oftentimes, weather patterns are discerned in conjunction with the formation of clouds over the spirit mountains. According to elder weather workers, hail and rainstorms mostly come from the direction of Mt. Ami Kodtse, the eldest among Rachekyi's mountain spirits. When the shape of the clouds over Ami Kodtse looks like soft sheep hair, hail will descend on the village. This hail belongs to a lesser spirit called *mamo* (མ་མོ།). When the sunrise over Ami Kodtse is veiled with colorful clouds, it also means incoming storms later in the day.

Cloud herding, as a symbolic act, consists of ritual recitations and the use of religious paraphernalia. When a weather worker takes his shift, he does not empty-handedly station himself on the top of a hill or on one of the four spirit mountains. Instead, he is alert. He sits down with his ritual text, *nyima-korlo* (ཉི་མའི་འཁོར་ལོ། sun-wheel), *orcha* (ཨུར་ཆ slingshot for herding livestock), and *mda* (མདའ། arrows). Meanwhile, he is authorized to enforce taboos regarding social behaviors of the villagers which may upset the spirit world and therefore trigger hail and rainstorms. Cloud herding means that the assigned weather worker polices three domains, namely the spirit world, the human realm, and the natural environment including the sky and the earth. When the yogi is on duty, no one in the village is allowed to do weeding in his or her family fields or to cut down trees. When

hail clouds are over the mountains, no one is permitted to walk outside of his or her house with empty buckets or to talk loudly. Mules, donkeys, horses, and other working livestock are kept in their corrals. Women have to comb their hair inside their houses. No domestic arguments are permitted. If these taboos are not reinforced, the weather worker will not be able to herd away destructive storm clouds. According to Rachekyi's weather workers, hail and rainstorms induced by the violation of these taboos belong to a category called *neg-shog* (ནག་ཕྱོགས།), or "harmful type," which brings destruction to crops and homes.

The *nyima-korlo*, in the shape of the sun, is an instrument used for preventative purposes. It invokes the presence of the sun, expelling storm clouds at their formative stage. It accompanies the yogi on guard for incoming storms during his shift. Hail and rain clouds are looked upon as if they were the spirits or demons of their association. The sun best dispels the clouds; however, spirits and demons are said to possess power to veil its light from humans. Thus, other ritualized methods are also frequently employed to ensure the success of cloud herding. The sequence of these methods progresses from eulogy to later warnings, counter-attacks, and the invocation of Buddhas and Dharma protective deities. In most instances, the yogi has memorized the eulogizing prayers for the mountain spirits. Bad weather is often attributed to humans' offense to the spirits. Eulogizing local spirits thus is the first step that calms their moods. Usually prayer verses are recited to achieve this effect. The content of these verses for each mountain spirit is not always fixed. Whenever a yogi emerges as a man of wisdom due to his practice, the verses he writes are often adopted by the community as a ritual text. The currently used verses dedicated to Ami Kodtse were written by Losey Hwangpo Rinpoche, a tantric master who spent fifteen years meditating in a cave in Ami Kodtse from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. His verses reflect his mountain-dwelling experiences while they praise Ami Kodtse:

> The majestic reputation of Ami Kodtse rises from all directions;
> The melodies of the Three Worlds praise his majesty.
> The bodhisattva vows of all spirits will be realized;
> They will be the honored ones in this world.
> Ami Kodtse stands out among spirits like Mt. Sumeru.
> Its peak is like a crystal mountain.
> It is the throne of Ami Kodtse, upon which he sits as the fearless one.
> All spirits in the area surround him.
> The horizons of the land form a crystal wheel of time;
> Assortments of flowers and medicinal plants are in blossom;
> Pure springs are erupting from the earth;
> All animals on Ami Kodtse are free and merry.
> Solitary yogis live on Ami Kodtse;
> They are seeking the ultimate wisdom by contemplating the Four Noble
> Truths;
> They leave their worldly belongings behind;
> Their acts are the colorful rainbows.

…

All corners of this expansive world
Are like the mature, blissful, and enlightened realm.
Happiness saturates the arid land.
Now let us greet our spirit, Ami Kodtse.
May we eliminate all darkness;
May we stay far away from hunger, war, and all other calamities;
May we always have enough water and strong bulls and stallions;
May our teachings and worldly politics be accompanied by auspicious
omens.

While the weather worker recites prayer verses eulogizing spirits, he also feeds *tsamba*, bread, and sometimes candy into mountain springs. These springs, small or large, are regarded as the mouths of dragons. The weather worker sometimes brings his children with him, sending them to do the feeding – especially in the summer time when crops need an adequate amount of rain but not violent storms that destroy them. Many children also recite prayer verses at ease. The commonly recited verses that are coupled with feeding go like this:

All offerings are to become the inexhaustible treasures;
They will make all spirits feel the bliss of Buddha Dharma;
Our offerings are countless treasures;
They magically spark.

…

The pleased spirits in the mountains are expected to reciprocate with their human counterparts by guarding the good weather over the village. If prayers and praises to the spirits do not work, and the harmful clouds keep gathering their momentum for rainstorms or hail, the yogi on guard then initiates warnings by firing rocks from an *orcha* (slingshot) toward the clouds. This slingshot is used to herd sheep and yaks in Tibet. Sheep and yaks are accustomed to the sound of the incoming rocks shot from the slingshot. On hearing the sheer sound of the slingshot, they rush back to their herds or are readily directed to an intended place. In the same manner, the clouds or the spirits are supposed to have a second thought about hurling storms down to the village when the warning shots are fired. If the warnings fail, the weather worker will then shoot arrows toward the clouds. In both warning and then counter-attacking storm clouds with slingshots or arrows, the weather worker visualizes himself as having an appearance of his *yidam* (personal Dharma-deity) while he recites the mantra *om*. The purpose of the visualization and mantra recitation is to make the three pellets which he has brought with him emit light. These pellets are called "pellets of secret teachings" (སྔགས་བསྒྲུབ་པའི་ཡུངས་ཀར་སོགས།). Consecrated at the village *stupa* they are made with colorful sand and ground barley. The light of the three pellets are believed to invoke Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and wrathful Dharma protective deities. Meanwhile, the yogi continues to visualize that fire comes out of his mouth, filling up the entire

sky and burning all demons into ashes. His fiery breath is meant to blow away the storm clouds or melt the hail in the sky.

If all measures fail, the yogi will then direct his frustrations to the mountain spirits. Ultimately, they are the ones allegedly causing harmful storms. Although the mountain spirits possess pre-Buddhist supernatural power, they were nevertheless converted from Bon to Buddhism a long time ago; thus, the Buddha and bodhisattvas are their superiors. The weather worker's frustrations are often expressed in verses that threaten to discredit the spirits' power and their truthfulness in front of their spiritual superiors. These verses, whether pre-written or improvised, all summon the spirits to the Buddhist realm. These are commonly recited passages:

> Oh, all the spirits, we ask you if karmic fruits and fate exist in this world.
> If you are true spirits, please discern truths from falsity for us.
> When we make mistakes, we see ourselves as ignorant ones.
> When you make mistakes, we see you as primordially wise spirits.
> In the name of the Buddha and Dharma Protectors
> We order you to fulfill our wishes
> And to protect the sangha of the Buddha.
> You do not disobey and betray your bodhisattva vows.

Like Rappaport, I also maintain that rituals produce external results. In anthropology of religion, the definition of ritual is often framed by such attributes as "stereotyped," "predictable," and "prescribed" (Norget 2000:80). The place where a ritual is performed is attributed with sacred qualities. Ritual is thus commonly seen as an other-worldly act of humans. From this angle, it is almost inevitable that scholars like G.C. Homans set ritual in the category of "other":

> Ritual Actions do not produce a practical result on the external world – that is one of the reasons why we call them ritual. But to make this statement is not to say that ritual has no function. Its function is not related to the world external to the society but to the internal constitution of the society. It gives the members of the society confidence, it dispels their anxieties, it disciplines their social organization.
>
> Homans 1941:172

I do see the other-worldly dimension of ritual; however, it does not separate this world from the world of gods. Neither does it separate the inner world of humans from their outer world. The reason that the interpreted function of ritual is often limited to satisfying the psychological needs of humans is because a human fear of gods and nature is presumed among many scholars of religious studies. In the Tibetan context, it is true that humans have moments of awe, fear, and powerlessness when they encounter imminent threats from both natural and supernatural forces; however, humans' actual ritualized acts, such as "cloud herding" and "weather guarding" also position humans themselves among those who possess power, and thus produce both internal confidence and external practical results.

Many of Rachekyi yogis' weather-ritual paraphernalia clearly aim at tangible results. Yogis at Rachekyi do not have sophisticated modern technology to gather or dispel rain and hail clouds, but their slingshots, arrows, and sun-wheels are instruments that are symbolic and yet possess the same teleology as modern tools. They are symbolic, because they are miniature in comparison to the immensity of a sky full of rain clouds. Yet their seemingly symbolic function is inherently connected with their practical goal – to drive away potentially disastrous storm clouds. The mastery of weather-controlling ritual qualifies local weather workers' power-position and regulatory role in their local environment.

From the eco-religious perspective, the power-pattern of humans, spirits, and the earth at Rachekyi resembles what Keller and Golley call "nested hierarchy," which is "a taxonomy of entities based on scale. Smaller entities are nested inside larger ones … " (2000:29). However, this hierarchy at Rachekyi is not uni-directional and does not imply that the smaller means lower and the larger means higher, or dominant. The animals and plants in the surrounding natural environment of Rachekyi are the family members of the mountain spirits. They are not the subjects of the humans. In other words, they take refuge in the spirits – not in humans. Human settlements are also enveloped by spirit mountains, and thus by the mountain spirits. Humans, moreover, entrust their *bla* (soul) to them. Thus, the spirit mountains are both sacred sites and places where humans store their souls. From this angle, the environmental hierarchy is ordered in terms of the animals' and humans' reverence and fear toward the mountain spirits.

However, when humans position themselves as Buddhists, they then possess both scriptural and ritual mechanisms to redirect the power of the mountain spirits toward their own advantage. Based on Tibetan Buddhist canonical reading, spirits, and deities, like their human counterparts, belong to the sentient world and are equally subject to the cycle of birth and death, which entails repeated suffering from one lifetime to another. The Buddha Dharma is the only refuge from this agony and is the gateway toward liberation from this cycle. Thus, when humans are overpowered or harmed by the spirits, they have no other recourse but to the Buddha's teachings. The invocation of both the historical Buddha and mythical bodhisattvas dissolves the hierarchy between humans and mountain spirits. In front of the Buddha, both become equal to each other. Regardless of their possession of supernatural power, the spirits could be as pitiful as any other sentient beings when they see their sentient fallibility induced by the three basic qualities of sentience – namely greed, hatred, and anger. In this sense, their supernatural power has to be reoriented toward the cause of Buddhism; they are reminded of being Dharma Protectors, instead of being "harmful ones." It is the *chos* (ཆོས།), or Buddha Dharma, that puts everyone on the same footing. It is *semjan* (སེམས་ཅན།), or sentience, which puts everyone into both negotiable and non-negotiable relationships. The relationship is negotiable when humans and the spirits mutually please each other. Humans please the spirits with the sound of prayers, the light of oil lamps, the aroma of food items, and the smoke of incense. In turn, spirits guard human souls and produce favorable weather for livestock and crops. The relationship is non-negotiable when humans anger the spirits by hunting animals and felling

trees without appreciation and apology. It is non-negotiable when the retaliation of the spirits reaches a destructive level.

In the religious context of Nyingma communities such as Rachekyi, the ultimate sacred postulate is the Buddha Dharma – which unquestionably directs human actions with spiritual orientations. It appears other-worldly. Faith in Buddhism begets "a hierarchy of values" which is ordered "from highly specific and often precise instrumental values to more general, vague, and even cryptic ultimate values" (Rappaport 1979:156). In this regard, any given ultimate sacred postulate produces and reproduces a set of "higher-order meanings" (ibid.:156). These abstract meanings, in turn, breathe a spiritual and moral life into a given human cosmos. Thus, this cosmos is sanctified in the material sense, meaning that mountains are not just mountains, but are spiritized – while humans are empowered and authorized by the Buddha's teachings to have a regulatory role in their ecological environment. However, in actual relational acts between humans, spirits, and environment, the sacred contents of the community are expressed in the terms of cosmological axioms – especially reciprocity between them. Based on his ethnographic work with the Tsembaga in New Guinea, Rappaport explains, "All assistance must be reciprocated, all trespasses compensated or avenged … spirits must be repaid for their help in past warfare if they are to provide the help needed for success in the future" (ibid.:118).

This is precisely how humans and spirits reciprocate with each other at Rachekyi. The results of the reciprocity are not limited only to the self-interests of humans and spirits; instead, there is a broader ecological significance. The physical landscape, as animated with spirits, becomes an inherent part of human's spiritual and psychological landscapes; the well-being of one affects the well-being of the other. Thus, there is no absolute hierarchy between humans and their local spirits. Both parties in fact submit themselves to Buddha Dharma. On a relative scale, spirits possess more supernatural power – while their human counterparts possess the power of Buddha Dharma. This power of Buddha Dharma is the power from ritualized Buddhist acts through which humans negotiate with the spirits and regulate a favorable ecological environment for their worldly livelihood.

When the power dynamics of humans, spirits, and the earth are translated into the terms of charisma studies, the authority embedded in territorial charisma is indeed multi-sourced. Territorial charisma, thus, is clearly linked to the *tulku* of a community as the ultimate authority sanctioned by Buddhism. Although not constantly under the *tulku* or his institutional supervision, this place-based charismatic authority is diffused in both human psyche and the animated ecological environment – but yet submits itself to the *tulku* as the representation of the historical Buddha. Thus, ultimately the territorial charisma of the community becomes an integral part of the *tulku*'s charisma. In this context, it is essential to include the "environmental conditions of charisma" (Burke and Brinkerhoff 1981:274) in the studies of charismatic Tibetan lamas. In the case of charismatic Nyingma communities, the environmental conditions are those earth-bound religious practices that are intended to produce pragmatic results for this worldly life. This religious phenomenon is not unique to Tibet, but takes place in other Buddhist traditions as well. It occurs as "spirit religion" (Gombrich and Obeyesekere

1988), "practical religion" (Tambiah 1970), and "apotropaic Buddhism" (Spiro 1970) within Theravada communities spread throughout Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma. These different nomenclatures all point to the same social and cultural conditions of Buddhists the world over: shortening the distance between the agony of sentience and the bliss of Buddhist enlightenment does not happen as suddenly as snapping one's fingers. The majority of Buddhists are not Dudjom Rinpoche, Master Hui Neng, or Suzuki Roshi, but are common people who pass through a lifetime with challenges of all sorts – be they physical, psychological, or material. Sudden saving grace does not descend on everyone.

The affective bond of Tibetans with their local spirits resembles that of Sinhala Buddhists. According to the research of Gombrich and Obeyesekere, soteriology is not the only concern of Sinhala Buddhists – especially the common folk who are the majority population of the island. What they find is a so-called "spirit religion" which is animistic in nature. This "spirit religion" bears influences from indigenous Sinhalese as well as Hindu religious practices; it thrives under the name of Buddhism. Gombrich and Obeyesekere recognize that spirit religion in Buddhism has a thaumaturgic (of miracles) function, which is highly visible in Sinhalese society when shamanistic Buddhists perform healing miracles in public. Spirit religion also bears communal values when it initiates numerous calendrical festivals and marks different stages of the life cycle for individuals. The practicality of the spirit religion of Sinhala mostly shows itself in the personal guardian deities of individual Buddhists. One's deity may have either Sinhalese origin or Hindu origin; however, the main point is that with the deity's protection the individual Buddhist feels emotionally supported in this world in the absence of the historical Buddhas. The Sinhalese Buddhist does not feel that he betrays his religion, but rather uses this local spirit medium to bless himself with a healthy body and mind in the name of the Buddha.

This practical dimension of Buddhism seems to have little to do with its abstract concepts of soteriology. The practical dimension, instead, pertains more to the social significance of religion – providing common believers with categories and symbols which facilitate the individual's comprehension of his circumstances as well as his capacity to evaluate them and cope with them emotionally (Wilson 1982). The practicality of the Sinhalese spirit religion or land-based Tibetan spirits mostly shows through the guardian deities of the community. The crucial point is that the individual Buddhist feels emotionally and pragmatically supported in this world, when faced with sickness, poverty and natural disasters. Neither the Sinhalese Buddhist nor the Tibetan Buddhist feels that he betrays Buddha Dharma in the embrace of local deities, but rather invokes local spirits to ensure physical and emotional stability as well as in the creation of a pleasing living environment in the name of the Buddha.

The place-based charisma of *tulkus* and their communities is an inherent part of what Sandra Bell calls the "shamanic complexes" of Tibetan Buddhism (Bell 1998:57). Local folk-spirit religion is absorbed into the complexes. The function of the folk-spirit religion does not gear itself toward the soteriological goals of Buddhism but rather has everything to do with daily occurrences of the community, i.e. healing, weather control, and other practical needs. In Melford

Spiro's study of the Burmese, folk-spirit religion embedded in Buddhism is called "apotropaic Buddhism;" positioned as the opposite of doctrinal Buddhism, apotropaic Buddhism emphasizes ritualized magical acts for worldly purposes (1970:140). It is contradictory to the soteriology of Buddhism but appears more efficacious to meet "the universal psychological need to cope with suffering" (ibid.:141). Likewise, the actual practice of Tibetan Buddhism among common folks, especially Nyingmapa, could be seen as a "shamanic Buddhism" (Bell 1998:57) which, according to Geoffrey Samuel, is "centred around communication with an alternative mode of reality (that of the Tantric deities) via the alternative states of consciousness of Tantric yoga" (ibid.:57). This assessment coincides with tantric practices in Rachekyi. When mountains are regarded as spirits, yogis there most certainly enter an alternative mode of reality in which their altered state of consciousness is scripturally sanctioned and ritually sustained, as discussed previously. As Buddhism possesses the ultimate authority in the spiritual economy of humans, spirits, and the earth, the charismatic authority of the *tulku*, as Bell points out, grows roots in shamanic Buddhism.

Shamanic Buddhism in Nyingma communities is not exactly the same as traditionally understood shamanism, in which shamans act as spirit mediums to connect the realm of humans and spirits and in which spirits belong to a different world. As discussed earlier in the chapter, spirits, humans, and other earthly species, in the Tibetan Buddhist context, all belong to the same sentient realm. All spirits and deities under the categories of *lha*, *klu* and *zhedek* are not other-worldly but are rather embodied in the landscape of Tibet – especially in mountains. Most of the deities have pre-Buddhist origins; however, their supernatural powers have been imbued with a Buddhist orientation since Buddhism entered Tibet in the seventh century (Kapstein 2000). The spirits' relationship with humans is horizontally connected through the landscape of Tibet. The Buddhist conversion of the spirits and their human counterparts subjects both parties to the earthly authority of Buddha Dharma, which is incarnated as the *tulku* – the leading spiritual elder of the community. In this regard, shamanic Buddhist yogis at Rachekyi, for instance, do not train themselves as mediums to meet up with local spirits, but do learn ritual techniques to communicate and negotiate with them for their sentient needs. Thus, on the scale of sentience, the spirits possess supernatural power that yogis do not have. Yet on the scale of Buddhist teachings, yogis and their master, most likely a *tulku*, possess ritual techniques to tame the spirits with Buddhist principles for this-worldly needs. All these inter-sentient communications take place through the spiritized and humanized local landscape including mountains, rivers, lakes, and the sky. In this regard, although the charismatic authority of the *tulku* ultimately comes from his lineage of Buddhist teachings, it nevertheless is also empowered by the supernatural power of land-based local spirits because of their submission to Buddha Dharma.

Within the frame of Buddhism, the territorial charisma of a *tulku*'s community has one of the qualities of what Lee Rozelle calls "ecosublimity," the psychic enlargement of the individual who encounters the awe and terror of the greatness of an object in nature (Rozelle 2006:3). Such enlargement in the Tibetan context is based on both scriptural and ritual empowerments of tantric Buddhism. Ritual

texts such as *sangchod* (བསང་མཆོད།) and *chenjol* (འབྱིན་བཅོལ།), and ritual paraphernalia such as the sun-wheel and the *orcha*, are all psychically and spiritually intended to enlarge the *tulku* and members of his community in facing the surrounding spiritized landscape. Theologically this enlargement/empowerment does not necessarily put humans in an absolutely dominant position over the spirit mountains, but it does indeed hold the spirits' Buddhist conversion in check; therefore the identities and functions of the spirits become ever more this-worldly oriented. They appear in the daily affairs of their human counterparts. When they are identified as warrior spirits, Dharma protectors, or wealth gods, they are humanized and their supernatural powers are channeled into the worldly well-being of their human counterparts. Furthermore, because of their inalienable bond with the earth, their human counterparts revere the earth as much as they revere them. Thus, in addition to the religious significance, the ecosublimity of the territorial charisma of a *tulku*'s community also manifests itself in the aesthetically pleasing appearance of the Tibetan landscape – because the spiritized and humanized natural environment has been awed, revered, and cared for in both a psychic and religious sense.

The ecological and aesthetic effects of Tibetans' folk-religious practices, embedded in tantric Buddhism, are obvious when one enters Tibetan regions from western China. When a non-Tibetan pilgrim takes a bus into Amdo from urban centers such as Lanzhou and Xining in northwest China, the bus crosses into different ethnic areas. By comparison, the Tibetan landscape is indisputably less polluted and aesthetically much more delightful than its Han and Muslim counterparts – where human domination over the earth is noticeably evidenced by air and water pollution and the fatigued, dehydrated appearance of farm land. The ecosublime quality of Tibet's territorial charisma, in most instances, touches and resonates with pilgrims' psyches, or their spiritual states of being. This is as deeply emotion-generating as *tulkus*' personality-based charisma. Shedding tears, sobbing, feeling goose-bumps, kneeling, and kissing the land of Tibet are common emotional manifestations among many first-timer Han pilgrims. These emotionally charged social and religious behaviors rarely show themselves in Han China. When they happen in Tibet, it is as if the Han pilgrim were a child returning to the embrace of his or her mother except that it is someone else's mother, in reality. Whether Tibet is a Shangri-la or a prison (Lopez 1998), whether China is a paradise lost or Tibet is a paradise regained, and how the reality and imagination of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism resonate with non-Tibetans, deserves a broader interpretation. This interpretation must consider factors concerning the modern urban collective psychology of religion, as well as the environmental ramifications of the singularly modeled global economic modernization of China.

4 Pilgrimage from Han China to high altitude enlightenment

Now, in the twenty-first century, Chinese Buddhist pilgrims are no longer a novelty in the mountains of Kham and Amdo. They are commonly found on regional buses and in a large number of Tibetan Buddhist communities. Unlike their Tibetan counterparts, whose pilgrimage routes are often centered upon sacred mountains and lakes, most Chinese pilgrims head straight to Tibetan monasteries. Chinese pilgrims seeking such explicit guidance from Tibetan masters are now relatively commonplace – although the Chinese Buddhist presence in Tibetan Qinghai is not an entirely recent phenomenon. As any cursory study of modern Sino-Tibetan cultural history would note, in the last century there were significantly two types of Chinese who entered Tibet. One type included Chinese monks, such as Dharma Masters Fazun and Nenhai, who traveled to Tibet in the Republic era. The other incursion was that of Chinese communist administrative and military personnel in the 1950s. The former, monks of the Republic era, had a strong interest in propagating Buddhism as a national religion of China for the purpose of building a modern China with Buddhist principles (Tuttle 2005). Their pilgrimage to Tibetan masters was meant to revive a Chinese Buddhism which had become corrupted; however, their effort was ultimately not successful and neither the Republic of China nor the People's Republic of China was founded on Buddhist teachings. Those visitors did not leave much of an impression on the collective memories of either common Tibetans or Chinese. Their pilgrimage writings and translations of Tibetan tantric texts became popular Buddhist literature only toward the mid-1990s, nearly a century later. In comparison, the socialist Chinese state's personnel did not go into Tibet to receive Buddhist teachings from Tibetan lamas, but to rewrite a history of traditional Tibet in the construction of a socialist, modern Tibet. They extensively reached out to the lower strata of Tibetan society, in a manner similar to that of European missionaries who positioned themselves among the poor and the needy in nineteenth-century China (thus creating an initial group of native converts known as "rice Christians"). With similar appeal to the disenfranchised, Chinese socialism turned Tibet upside down. The wretched and their descendants became the élite of modern, socialist Tibet, and in keeping with the ideals of secular revolution, the religious system of Tibet was a target of destruction. This group of the Chinese visitors to Tibet promulgated themselves as "liberators." They were initially welcomed

among the poor, but eventually came to be feared and detested because of a series of political campaigns that were destructive to the cultural traditions of Tibet – including the Democratic Reform of the late 1950s (Goldstein 1997) and the Cultural Revolution (Oser 2006).

Half a century later, a new group of Chinese has begun to enter Tibet. They come as pilgrims and students of Tibetan Buddhism, rather than as masters of a modern ideology. They come with psychological wounds, personal desires, and the intent to embrace tantric methods for spiritual liberation and worldly achievement. Their presence has become an accepted norm in Tibet, especially in the Nyingmapa communities of Kham and Amdo. On the sociopolitical level, the presence of Chinese Buddhists in Tibet is largely connected with the socially marginalized status of religion and the political vacuum of the market system in contemporary China. In the foreground of China's globally linked market, the state is no longer omnipresent. The power of the state initiated the market economy; however, the power of the market does not always comply with the political agenda of the state. It is often harnessed by common folk to revive things marginalized and suppressed, such as religious practices.

In this chapter, by focusing on the experiences of contemporary Chinese pilgrims in Kham and Amdo, I discuss external conditions which amplify the charismatic appeal of Tibetan *tulkus* and their communities for Chinese Buddhists – particularly the emerging cyber-version of Tibetan Buddhism in China, in relation to the social reality of Chinese Buddhism. In contextualizing current Sino-Tibetan Buddhist interactions, I wish to initiate a post-Turnerian discourse concerning the state of the pilgrimage threshold known as "*communitas*". This state describes the liminal period of a rite of passage, in which all participants embrace an ontology of undifferentiated relationship based on a common bonding with their religious/spiritual elders (Turner 1969:96). Given the social and political reality of religion in China, and assuming that *communitas* exists among Chinese pilgrims, this contextualized liminal period is not simply a spiritual space and time in which, while taking up an ostensibly more enlightened bonding with one's spiritual mentors, everyone is stripped of his or her social and familial identities. *Communitas*, in this chapter, also signifies physiological, psychological, and social conditions which intertwine the varied volitions of the pilgrim in the high altitude environment of tantric Tibetan communities. The *communitas* of Chinese pilgrims does not always manifest as a drama of Buddhist conversion in a clear-cut, linear fashion, burgeoning candidly from a non-religious state of being to a religious state of being. Instead it is multifaceted, involving cultural and linguistic challenges, the collapse of pilgrims' pre-conceived images of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, and interpersonal competition for closer bonding with charismatic Tibetan *tulkus*. While examining these complex dynamics in subtle command of Chinese Buddhist *communitas*, in the following chapter I meanwhile continue to expound upon the sociocultural commercialization of Tibetan Buddhism and the reasons why Chinese Buddhists are increasingly interested in Tibetan Buddhism.

Virtual landscape of Tibetan Buddhism

Hagiographic imagination of tulkus

Since the late twentieth century, growing numbers of scholars in the West have begun to critique the imagined Tibet found in cultural productions of the West. The most vocal of these scholars are Donald Lopez and Orville Schell. To Lopez, in the imagination of the West, "Tibet is seen as the cure for an ever-ailing Western civilization, a tonic to restore its spirit" (Lopez 1998:8), while to Schell, the imagined Tibet is a "virtual Tibet" in which "fantasies of escape" (Schell 2000:16) are visually expressed in Hollywood productions. He remarks, "No longer is the creation of our Tibet largely the product of the written word working on our imaginations. Now it can be visited as if it were a multidimensional Web site" (ibid.:208). Likewise, virtual Tibet is also becoming more and more visible in the public space of China, especially on privately operated websites featuring Tibetan Buddhism. However, it would be too simplistic to equate virtual Tibet with "fantasies of escape," or to identify those non-Tibetans who have become Tibetan Buddhists as "prisoners of Shangrila" (Lopez 1998) in the context of contemporary China. It is worthwhile to pursue the social and psychological implications of the "fantasies," the "escape," the "prison," and the "cure" in both virtual and actual pursuits of Tibetan Buddhist teachings among the Chinese, particularly those who traverse from the virtual to the actual or from the imagined to the real, and vice versa. Both the virtual and the actual are real in all accounts, be they social, political, psychological, or spiritual. The complexity of both is best expressed in tandem with the mental and the physical routes of Chinese pilgrims to Tibetan Buddhist communities.

In my fieldwork, I have found that most Chinese pilgrims start by reading online or printed copies of the hagiographies of popular Tibetan *tulkus*, as well as narratives by veteran pilgrims about specific monasteries, before setting foot in Tibet. The hagiographies in particular are partially translations from Tibetan and partially literary enhancements by the *tulkus*' Chinese disciples. Many of them emphasize that the influx of Chinese Buddhists to Tibet in the twenty-first century verifies the visions and prophecies of *tulkus* of the past. This prophetic invitation to potential Chinese pilgrims sets a strong tone of what Tibetan lamas often call *le-hung* (ལས་དབང་།), or the spiritual-psychic affinity solidified in one's past lifetimes but expressed in the present tense. The hagiography of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok narrates the future appearance of Chinese *dakinis* in the tantric vision of Terton Sogyal Lerab Lingpa, Khenpo's previous incarnation (2000:9). The hagiography of Sangye Tsering Rinpoche of Smyoshil Monastery in Kham cites an encounter of his previous incarnation, the legendary Khenpo Ngawang Palzang (1879–1941):

> … upon arriving in Menchu where Princess Wencheng [Chinese, Tang Dynasty] had washed her hair. There was a tree upon which twenty-eight *dakinis* resided. An aroma entered my body and mind giving me the bliss of *samadhi* [high mental concentration]. While I was in the non-dualistic realm,

> Princess Wencheng in her Chinese attire appeared in the sky. The glow radiated from her fair-skinned cheeks. Her figure was tall and slim. Her lotus-like hands held a sutra. She bestowed empowerment upon me. This pure vision lasted until I reached the foothills of Mt. Pedma …
>
> Gyatso 2004:56

The mystical connection between Tibetan tantric teachings and Chinese Buddhists in the twenty-first century is described more directly in Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's auto-hagiography.

> In the Water-Horse year [2002], it was the first time Sangye Tsering Rinpoche gave *dzogchen* initiation to one hundred-fifty Chinese disciples. Not long after the initiation had been completed, the Chinese character 'Buddha' appeared on the large rock at the entrance of the monastery.
>
> Gyatso 2003:2

On the website of Lungdok Rinpoche, the abbot of Garjed Monastery at Rachekyi Village in Amdo, the prophecy of his master's previous incarnation (Tsewang Rentsen Rinpoche, another legendary Nyingma lama) is cited, "In the next thirty or forty years, Chinese disciples will come to seek the teachings of our lineage … " (Tseltrim Lodri 2002).

These descriptive narratives, available in digital format, build congenial cultural and spiritual ties with their future *tulkus* for Chinese. These visions and prophecies are unverifiable, but their sociocultural existence creates an affirmative impression for potential [non-Tibetan] pilgrims: now is the right, prophesied time to travel far and high to receive tantric teachings from the *tulkus*. While prophesies found within Tibetan Buddhist hagiographies are welcoming to potential Chinese pilgrims, another critical factor which contributes to the bonding of non-Tibetan pilgrims with Tibetan *tulkus* is the precise utilization of the hagiographic genre in veneration of the *tulkus* themselves. The contents of these texts vary; however, the genre of all Tibetan Buddhist hagiographies appears similar in an ordering of three general stages. These stages include, namely, a brief history of lineage, a telling of the circumstances surrounding the auspicious birth of the *tulku*, and accounts of his or her miraculous power. This genre expresses the universal purpose of hagiography – that is, to underscore the sainthood of a religious figure.

As an anthropologist trained in North America, I was often asked to help edit introductory literature of monasteries as well as specific *tulkus*' hagiographies during my fieldwork. The youngest son of Ogyan Tsering, Rinpoche of Dudjom lineage in Golok, approached me to refine his father's hagiography in 2006. The style of the text resembles that of the hagiographies of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, Tsewang Rentsen Rinpoche, and others. Ogyan Tsering's sainthood began prior to his birth, because of his unbroken lineage. The reincarnated bodies of a *tulku* change over time but the soul or consciousness stays the same through its successive bodies. In other words, the eternity of this saintly bodhisattva soul finds itself in numerous successive, ephemeral, sentient bodies. The narrator in the hagiography of Ogyan Tsering Rinpoche recounts:

> When our Master was born, the earth shook. An auspicious rain moistened the land. Flowers were blooming. The sounds of bells and drums filled the sky. Countless images of Kuntu Zangpo (ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ།) Bodhisattva appeared in a colorful rainbow. Our infant master, defilement-free and as pure as a lotus flower, showed his smile and gazed at everything in this sentient world. His gaze had the sparks of a saint …
>
> Even in life-threatening times, our Master did not abandon the bodhisattva vow of teaching Buddha Dharma and benefiting all sentient beings. In 1976 someone disclosed to the authorities the location of the cave where he was meditating. However, our Master was able to foresee the impending imprisonment. When the police arrived at the cave, he had already vanished. They did a thorough search but found no trace of our Master. In fact he did not go far. With his magic power he entered a crack on a cliff where only birds could enter. Later he expanded the crack into a cave. He meditated in the cave for the next one hundred days without food, sitting in the lotus position, with his mind merged with the light of the Buddha.
>
> Jigme Kunzang Gyatso 2008:4–6

Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's hagiography is of similar narrative bent:

> When he was fifteen years old, the situation in Kham was drastically worsening. Rinpoche was locked up in prison. … Although his body was shut in the fortress of the prison, he was able to exit and enter it without hindrances. The magic power of his enlightenment allowed him to walk through the thick walls of the prison …
>
> Once, while he was at Dharma Monastery, he kneaded a ball of butter into a frog at a stream nearby. He inserted a mantra written on a piece of paper into the hollow belly of the butter frog. He was going to hide it behind a rock. When he moved the rock, a deep hole appeared beneath the rock. He placed the butter frog in the hole. As soon as he let go of it, it became a real frog! The next day, some of his guests went back to the hole and saw the frog still alive. … This is a proof of what is called "The quantified appearance of the enlightenment wisdom."
>
> Gyatso 2003

In Frank Renolds and Donald Capps' *The Biographical Process*, hagiography is "sacred biography" and "refers to those accounts written by followers or devotees of a founder or religious savior" (Renolds and Capps 1976:3). In their reading of varied sacred biographies, they find two common traits – namely humanization and spiritualization (ibid.:3). The humanization process identifies the "everyman" within the sacred person, as an epitomization of the overarching qualities commonly shared by humanity. Thus, the quality of this "everyman" reflects the ideals in humanity, i.e. courage, forbearance, wisdom, and compassion. In the meantime, the sacred biographer "spiritualizes the subject by expunging references to his human weakness" (ibid.:3). Both humanization and spiritualization involve the sacred biographer in "the inclusion or omission of materials" (ibid.:3).

In this respect, I share the same sentiment as Renolds and Capps – "[Scholars] are painfully aware that the available texts provide us with very little authentic information concerning the details of his [the saint's] life … " except that he is the man of "everyman" (ibid.:3).

It is not unique that Tibetan *tulkus* are being transfigured into "the man of everyman" in contemporary China. This popular imaginative process is identical to what has occurred in the West – where Tibet is actively idealized as a pristine, sacred place, and where Tibetan Buddhist figures also appear with an aura of what Peter Bishop calls the "archetypal style of fantasy" (Bishop 1989:viii), in his interpretation of the manner in which Tibet is imagined among Westerners. This idealization pertains to what James Hillman calls *mundus imaginalis*, from which intended images are almost always imagined beyond worldly actuality and limits (Hillman 2004:15). Philosophically and idealistically, a *tulku* is a Buddhist archetype imbued with the meanings of enlightenment and associated with images of either the historical Buddha or deity-like bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri. However, the hagiographic constructions of *tulkus* often neglect their ties with their families and communities, as actual persons who possess personalities and idiosyncrasies. These unrealistic portrayals of *tulkus* certainly motivate potential pilgrims, but culturally and psychologically such representations poorly prepare those who actually decide to take discipleship with the *tulkus* of their choice in the highland of Tibet; narrative emphasis on the ideal nature of a *tulku* which lacks inclusion of his or her contextualized daily life may, however unintentionally, foster unrealistic expectations.

Fantastic narratives of veteran pilgrims

Virtual Tibetan Buddhism became popular in the mid-1990s. Those who are responsible for this unique cyberspace of Tibetan Buddhism in China are mostly a handful of Chinese pilgrims who studied at Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Larung Academy in Sertar. Their presence in Kham and Amdo coincided with the prime of Tibetan religious and cultural revitalization – between the late 1980s and the turn of the twenty-first century – during which time Tibetan Buddhism was rapidly resurfacing from past suppression. This decade-long period overlapped much of the era of "Tibetanization," here explained by Robert Barnett:

> The Chinese state and many Tibetans had converging interests in this period, for different reasons: the state itself wanted to demonstrate its tolerance of difference, and in these cases for once did not need to resort to either force or fiction for this difference to be displayed. Tibetan officials were thus able to embark upon and facilitate new initiatives that involved specifically Tibetan cultural expression.
>
> Barnett 2006:38

Nyingma monasteries in Kham and Amdo, in particular, underwent quick reconstruction. By comparison, Han Chinese regions were not interested in reviving traditional cultures, but rather fully engaged in the state's modernization program

– coupled with a multi-variant focus on social and political issues such as corruption, human rights, power abuses, and religious suppression. Of all the different traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, Nyingma *tulkus* and their communities took the initiative to invite Han Chinese to receive the transmission of tantric Buddhist teachings and to start public discourses, in the Chinese language, about modernity and tradition, science and Buddhism. The late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok instituted an incentive to encourage Chinese Buddhists, by giving Chinese pilgrims almost immediate tantric transmission and instructions when they arrived on his monastic campus. In addition, for those who arrived without financial support, his Academy allotted a living stipend in the form of cash and rice. Other Nyingma monasteries followed suit. These initial Chinese pilgrims began to broadcast their experiences, via websites and publications, upon returning home.

The *Red Aura of Nyingmapa* (宁玛的红辉) briefly appeared in the Chinese book market in the mid-1990s. As a typical example of veteran Chinese pilgrim writings, it immediately captured the imagination of Han Chinese Buddhist readers. Chen Xiaodong, a freelance writer based in Shanghai, authored *The Red Aura* in the style of investigative journalism with the addition of his own broad imaginative strokes on the landscape of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. It served as an introduction of Khenpo Jigme Phunksok's Academy for Han Chinese readers. Chen begins his first chapter, "A Wondrous Pureland Under the Blue Sky":

> Above the expansive mountains there is the deep blue sky. In Han regions, you have never seen such crisp, clear sky. This is truly the clear sky. Moreover, I tell you without exaggeration, you see the blueness of the sky is the blueness of crystal light, as if it were freshly purified in the stream of the Milky Way. You may also look at the white clouds – they are the white of snow, the white of the extraordinary, and the white of the dazzling. They are filled with vibrant motion. When they are floating in this pure, crystal blue sky, they are really like living beings freely soaring in the immense universe. … This is truly the wondrous pureland of Vajrayana.
>
> Chen 2002:6

For the last ten years, his website has been a center for a collective imagination of the "red aura" in China, here referring to the red robes of Nyingma monks and nuns. Chen's conversion to Tibetan Buddhism came about rather suddenly in the mid-1990s, after spending two years in prison for an article he wrote which had been deemed offensive to Jiang Zemin, the former president of China. Through a friend who had just returned from Kham, he learned about the transformative quality of Nyingma tantrism. He left Shanghai for Kham, and soon took refuge in Tibetan Buddhism. In his writings, the modulation of his personal conversion to Tibetan Buddhism is expressively articulated in his frequent literary descriptions of miraculous scenes and events in Kham. In his recent book titled *Mystical Śariras*, he continues to emphasize the miraculous aspect of Tibetan Buddhism:

> The fourth month of the lunar calendar, speaking of seasons, is the time for the return of spring to the earth and for the blossoming of flowers. However,

in the Tibetan highland, 4,000 meters above sea level, ice and snow still stay where they are, the winds off the mountains still bring freezing cold. On the bare earth, one can hardly see spring grass and green leaves.

Suddenly one day, thousands of white śariras covered the bare, muddy slopes of mountains. … It's the rain of śariras from heaven! It's the rain of śariras from heaven, indeed! The śariras of the Buddha-dharma announced the coming of spring and the truthful practices in the Latter Day of the Buddha-dharma. The rain of śariras, again, proves the truth of the incredible Buddha-dharma.

Chen 2003:230

Śarira is a Sanskrit word that means the remnants of a cremated body, which have survived fire. The physical relics vary from tiny grains to large nuggets. Only persons with high spiritual achievement are said to produce *śariras*. The tradition of honoring *śariras* started with the historical Buddha Sakyamuni. After his body was cremated, there were remains of his body that the fire was not able to consume at all. Since then, *śariras* have become a sign, or a benchmark, by which Buddhists measure whether or not a practitioner was a spiritually achieved one. In Chen's description, *śarira* is not simply the relic of the cremated body of a monk, which could be discerned with a naked eye, but something that can actually rain down from the sky. Chen's publications have contributed to the popular Chinese imagination of Tibetan Buddhism, in terms of how Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan landscape are capable of such spiritual miracles.

"Miracle" is the key word in this popular imagination among Han Chinese adherents of Tibetan Buddhism. The seeking of miraculous empowerment has become a keen endeavor of Han Chinese, relating pilgrims' spiritual lives to the landscape of Tibetan Buddhism in both a physical and a symbolic sense. Once back in their home regions, many Han Chinese pilgrims narrate their experiences of Kham and Amdo in a similarly retrospective fashion. In Peter Bishop's study of the West's imagination of Tibet, he points out that the sacred place conceived in the traveler's mental reality finds opportunities to interpolate itself with the temporal progression of his/her experience in the geographic reality of the sacred place (Bishop 1989:viii). As a type of literary production, pilgrims' narratives fulfill the logic of temporal progression. The interpolation of the pilgrim's personal identification of the sacredness with its geographic location is often a mythologizing process in which each journey is relived in a literary manner for the benefit of an audience. In this respect, I share the same sentiment as that of Bishop, who writes, "Travel writing is not concerned only with the discovery of places but also with their creation" (ibid.:3).

On a Web forum addressing Tibetan Buddhism (www.cbfn.org), Zhao Yong, a veteran pilgrim, shares his experience in a Nyingma monastery in Kham:

I can't tell you how my soul deeply repented and prayed on the summit 5,400 meters above sea level. For a long, long time, I stared into the vast space around me with my mouth wide open. Waves of tears welled up in my eyes and blocked the dazzling light deflected from snow and ice. That moment

> of solitude seemed to enable me to clutch a corner of the garments of the celestial beings residing in these endless mountains. The face of the highland expresses itself according to how your mood looks upon it. If you are relaxed, you'll see a rainbow rising from the mountain across the valley, children and goats will rush to you with their joyful sounds. … Everything here seems familiar to me and plucks the strings of my heart.
>
> Zhao 2003

Zhao's retrospective narrative is meant to convey the sacredness embedded in the landscape and the people of the monastery. One trait of pilgrim narratives is the sacredness of place represented in a consistently magnetic way that guides readers into the spatially pleasing environment. The actual or potential dangers inherent in the geographic location of the sacred place are usually not invited into the narratives, as though they are separate from or would endanger the sacredness. Thus, what is left out of the narratives, including treacherous roads and climatic conditions unfavorable to non-Tibetans, often engenders the fantastic distance of virtual Tibet from geographic Tibet. This fantastic distance between the virtual and the geographic is part of a mental spatiality which is embedded in an imagined Tibet as a creative platform, for the expression of a collective yearning for a utopia in which benign forces of both humanity and divinity converge with one another. Bishop notes, "Once fear and darkness have yielded to unequivocal hope, then the sacred place has become a utopia. A whole new set of fantasies is then mobilized" (Bishop 1989:10). He continues, "Sacred places are sites of paradoxical power – of destruction, and also of renewal. They can induce a sense of both serenity and terror. Such places are terrible, yet also fascinating. Contemporary use of the term 'sacred place' frequently lacks such paradox; too often sacred places are imagined merely as benign places for healing and contemplation" (ibid.:10). This is appreciably germane in appraising the significance of Chinese Buddhists' exposure to virtual Tibetan Buddhism prior to their actual pilgrimage into Tibet.

Awe and terror in the high altitude landscape

Two-dimensional images of virtual Tibet and one's actual visual experience in the mountains of Kham and Amdo both affirm the sublime quality of Tibet's landscape – especially from an aesthetic perspective, for those who have not yet been initiated to see the embedded spirit world beneath and above the awesome landscape. Pre-pilgrimage exposure to photographic and descriptive images of *tulkus* and the landscapes of their respective communities is often persuasive enough to prompt one's decision to embark on a pilgrimage to a particular community of Tibetan Buddhism. However, the actual climatic and topographic conditions of the high altitude landscapes are not as inviting as they appear in photos and descriptions found on the internet and in printed publications. The sublime mountains both awe and frighten the pilgrim from the lowlands of China.

A unique feature of the Chinese pilgrimage experience is what Arnold Van Gennep called the "territorial passage as a direct rite of passage by means of which a person leaves one world behind him and enters a new one" (Van Gennep 1960:19).

Territorial passages, in Van Gennep's *Rites of Passage*, involve natural objects which are imbued with religious significance, such as consecrated rocks and trees designated for given rites and ritual. In this sense, spatial passages are equated to spiritual passages (ibid.:22). For Chinese pilgrims, the territorial passage to Tibet occurs in both a spatial and a spiritual sense. Spatially, the territorial passages are literally massive mountain passes which have separated Tibet from China for centuries. From Chengdu to the hinterlands of Kham, the pilgrim passes through at least four or five immense mountain passes with altitudes between 3,800 and 5,000 meters. From Xining to Nyingma communities in Golok, Amdo region, the highway similarly winds up and down through numerous mountain clefts. Spatial passages for pilgrims also include the climatic conditions and life-ways of such high altitudes. Passing through these territorial thresholds will not necessarily guarantee the pilgrim's spiritual empowerment. Pilgrimage passage is not limited to mountains, but continues even after the pilgrim has entered Kham or Amdo. On the surface, these subsequent thresholds are more spatial and cultural than spiritual, more likely to appear as physical and psychological challenges rather than spiritual tests. Hindrances to the pilgrim are both latent and imminently inherent to the physical landscape of Tibet, in the forms of horrific traffic accidents, dietary mal-adaptation, and the effects of altitude differences, including palpitations and dependency on oxygen bags.

In my fieldwork with Chinese pilgrims who travelled to Nyingma monasteries, I have seen high altitude change a pilgrim's pre-designed spiritual plan and reverse his or her pilgrimage schedule. After a long bus ride through treacherous mountain passes, the pilgrim is not yet necessarily acclimatized to the high altitude environment. It is not uncommon to find pilgrims suffering altitude-induced discomfort in desperate search of transportation turning back to Chengdu or Xining immediately. One late afternoon in 2002, I was in line purchasing a bus ticket to Dege at the Ganzi bus station. I saw a Chinese nun who was pacing in the lobby, over and over again mumbling, "What's this place?" She appeared disoriented. I offered my help. She was in transition to Yachen Monastery (ཡ་ཆེན་དགོན་པ།), which is only five hours away from Ganzi County seat, for a *dzogchen* initiation ceremony. She was overcome by her frustration at not being able to find a ride back to Chengdu on the same day. Finally she paid over three thousand yuan to a Khampa driver to take her down to Dartsedo (Kangding in Chinese). Another illustration would involve one pilgrim who had planned to engage in solitary meditation at Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's monastery for three months. He ended up staying there only for five days. Every night he had painful palpitations because his acclimatization to the high altitude was not as successful as that of other pilgrims. There were no buses to be found in the mountains. Sangye Tsering Rinpoche managed to borrow an old Beijing jeep from the head of a village nearby, sending the pilgrim down to Ganzi, the nearest bus portal back to Chengdu.

Territorial passages in Tibet are much more physical and climatic than spiritual, for Chinese pilgrims. However, the potential imminence of physical calamity attends not only the pilgrim from afar, but also local Tibetans. One winter day in 2003, I was on the way to Sangye Tsering Rinpoche's Smyoshil Monastery with two young monks who had borrowed an old car to make the passage. As we approached the summit of a 15,000-foot mountain pass, a heavy snowstorm began; within a few minutes the narrow dirt road was quickly covered with snow. After

a moment of indecision we agreed to turn back, but because the road was narrow, we had to get out and rotate the car so it faced the opposite direction. As we were pushing the car around, we heard loud cracking sounds echoing in the mountains. Just ahead of us a truck rolled off the road, tumbling down the cliff. In comparison with the immensity of the mountains and the distance between the summit and the bottom, the truck looked smaller than a matchbox – so insignificant, as the power of nature reduced it into fragments: the windshield popping out of its metal frame, shattered cargo littered all over the snow around the rolling truck, and no sign of life from the driver's compartment. We felt fortunate that we were not in the position of the truck, and didn't hesitate to make our way back down.

The experiences of territorial passage for Chinese pilgrims in Kham and Amdo could be identified as "ecosublime" – a construct proposed by Lee Rozell in his literary analysis of the evolving ecology of America. In the context of contemporary Sino-Tibetan Buddhist interactions, an ecosublime experience concerns "the awe and terror of a heightened awareness of the ecological home" (Rozelle 2006:1) of Tibet. When the territorial passage is valued as an ecosublime experience, the heightened awareness of the sublime landscape of Tibet is rendered of binary opposites; namely, the virtual image of the Tibetan landscape versus its physical counterpart, and the imaginative mindscape of the pilgrim versus the physical landscape of Tibet. From a purely aesthetic perspective, what pilgrims see in Kham and Amdo offers corporeal confirmation of the awesome, breathtaking photographic images of the landscapes which saturate virtual Tibet. The mindscape of the pilgrim is loaded with these aesthetically pleasing images prior to his or her actual pilgrimage. This pre-pilgrimage imagery and concordant imaginations induce the pilgrim in the development of "topophilia" toward the Tibetan landscape. This initial topophilia of the pilgrim is mostly based on the aesthetic encounter with one's natural environment in a Kantian regard. As the splendid scenes of Tibet's landscape heighten the sublime dimensions of the pilgrim's internal perception, they prompt creative forces that fuel the imaginative needs of the pilgrim in anticipation of the success of his or her journey into a spiritual utopia. The power of nature is manifested in polarities – there are formidable events such as traffic accidents and snowstorms which terrify the pilgrim when under their direct threat, and, in the meantime, such threats generate an awesome awareness of the sublime if one is in a secure position from which to observe their great magnitude. Kant remarks,

> They [violent events of nature] raise the forces of the soul above the height of vulgar commonplace, and discover within us a power of resistance of quite another kind, which gives us courage to be able to measure ourselves against the seeming omnipotence of nature.
>
> Kant 1980:503

The mindscape of the pilgrim, in this sense, is a collective storehouse of narratives, images, and imaginations that are built upon each other and reinforced by the retrospectives of veteran pilgrims. Both memory and imagination are interwoven in the tapestry of virtual Tibetan Buddhism in China. Regarding human ability to recount and recollect, according to Vico's construct of poetic geography,

memory has "different aspects: memory when it remembers things, and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship" (Vico 1994:313). As the landscape of Tibet is actively imagined into a landscape of spiritual liberation, more and more Chinese Buddhist pilgrims enter the geographic space of Kham and Amdo with high expectations – they want to find a Buddhist utopia and saint-like, perfect Tibetan teachers with omnipotent agency for transcendental empowerment. However, a realistic understanding of Tibet and an authentic experience of Tibetan Buddhist transcendence asks more than just a round-trip bus fare or a fifteen-day tantric initiation. It requires that the pilgrim remaps his or her mindscape by embracing not only the doctrines and practices of Tibetan Buddhism but, most critically, Tibet's culture and language as well as the spirit world which animates Tibet's landscape. The continually territorial passage for Chinese pilgrims is thus physical, cultural, and religious, all combined.

Cacophony of *communitas*

Similar to their Tibetan counterparts, Chinese Buddhist pilgrims traditionally also pay seasonal homage to sacred mountains throughout China, such as Wutai Shan, Putuo Shan, and Ermei Shan. These mountains are said to be spiritual abodes of revered bodhisattvas. Thus, the designated mountains are objects of pilgrimage. Literally "pilgrimage," or *ch'ao-shan chin-hsiang* (朝山进香, pinyin: *chaoshan jinxiang*) in Chinese, according to Susan Naquin:

> implies neither journey nor circuit. *Ch'ao-shan* means "paying one's respects to a mountain," as one would in an audience with a ruler. *Chin-hsiang*, "to present incense," refers to the acts of bringing and then burning incense so as to make contact with the deity.
>
> Naquin 1992:11

"Pilgrim," or *hsiang-ke* (香客 pinyin: *xiangke*) in Chinese, means "the one who offers incense." Traditional Chinese pilgrimage activities also fit Van Gennep's model of territorial passage, as each of the sacred Buddhist mountains has a series of designated physical locations that have traditionally been cherished as the hierophanies of deified bodhisattvas. By viewing and touching the physically manifested sacredness in these natural places, the pilgrim is blessed and empowered. This tradition of Chinese pilgrimage continues still in twenty-first century China.

However, those who choose to head for Tibetan Buddhist sites prefer to call themselves *chao-shen-zhe* (朝圣者) or "one(s) who pay homage to the sacred". Among themselves, they address each other as *fa-you* (法友) or *dao-you* (道友), both of which mean "Dharma friend." These are abbreviated translations of the Tibetan phrase *dorje chos-drog* (རྡོ་རྗེ་ཆོས་གྲོགས།), or "vajra-Dharma friend." In most instances, Chinese pilgrims come into a *tulku*'s community in a group or through referral. It is rare to see a single pilgrim. Sometimes, for a pre-announced tantric initiation event, buses are chartered and the reception of the pilgrims is neatly scheduled. Each time, there are quite a few pilgrims who

decide to have a long-term stay within the *tulku*'s community upon completion of the Dharma event.

The actual process of Chinese pilgrimage does not fully manifest itself in what Turner calls "*communitas*," which would emphasize a horizontal bonding of pilgrims. According to Turner, one who is in *communitas* is a "transitional being" (Turner 1967:95) in the sense of "betwixt and between" (ibid.:93–111), which indicates an intermediate position neither altogether one nor altogether the other. Turner juxtaposes *communitas* with his notion of structure, to underscore the special ritual of space and time. Herein, "structure" refers to social structure as "a more or less distinctive arrangement of mutually dependent institutions and the institutional organization of social positions and/or actors which they imply" (Turner 1974:272). The opposite of social structure is *communitas*, which Turner characterizes as anti-structure. Anti-structure conveys the message of union rather than divisiveness. In Turner's view, it only recognizes sameness with the individual's voluntary forsaking of his or her social status and differences. It is synchronic rather than diachronic. The anti-structural nature of *communitas*, according to Turner, breeds a different kind of inter-personal relationship that is undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, and non-rational. It is an "Essential We relationship" (ibid.:47). Anti-structure, then, is positive for those who are situated in *communitas* for soteriological reasons. For Turner:

> Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or "holy," possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.
>
> Turner 1969:128

Turner's notion of *communitas* is based on much of his ethnographic work with the Ndembu tribe in Zambia. It is also exercised in the interpretation of Christian pilgrimage in Europe and South America. In the case of contemporary Sino-Tibetan Buddhist interactions, *communitas* clearly exists among Chinese pilgrims in that they all refer each other as vajra-Dharma friends. However, the most highly pronounced characteristic of Chinese *communitas* is not merely that of horizontal comradeship amongst pilgrims, as of that emphasized by Turner; instead, it is the pilgrims' charismatic bonding with their Tibetan *tulkus*. It is thus the vertical relationship of the pilgrim with his or her Tibetan master which weaves together the *communitas*. The vertical order of the *communitas* does emphasize the "Eternal We relationship;" however, this "We" oftentimes solely entails the singular relationship between the individual pilgrim and his Tibetan *tulku*, rather than the total "We" in a pluralistic sense – that is, the horizontally conceived comradeship amongst all pilgrims in the same group.

As the actual practice of tantric Buddhism and the veteran pilgrims' narratives all emphasize the critical position of Tibetan masters who, in most instances, are *tulkus*, the formation of *communitas* among Chinese pilgrims is inevitably *tulku*-centered. This is a religious phenomenon of Chinese pilgrimage to Tibetan

Buddhist communities. *Tulkus* are highly idealized by Chinese pilgrims. A *tulku*, especially if he or she is the abbot of a monastery, is not always other-worldly, focusing on tantric teachings only. He or she has numerous worldly agendas to fulfill, especially the reconstruction of his or her damaged or destroyed monastery and the use of modern technological means such as the internet and digital printing media to facilitate his or her teachings beyond Tibet. When a *tulku* has established a master–disciple relationship with Chinese Buddhists, he or she looks for talents and resources to maintain and expand the existing pool of new disciples. Desirable talents include Web-design, Tibetan–Chinese translation, fluency in publishing software, abilities in visual post-production, and accounting. Resources include but are not limited to cash offerings, vehicles, and large residential homes for the use of Dharma teaching in urban China. Meanwhile, tantric doctrines also sanction the guru as an embodiment of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and therefore as an ultimate gateway to the pilgrim's mastery of tantric methods and spiritual enlightenment. Not one, but all of these factors contribute to the vertical nature of Chinese *communitas* as headed by chosen *tulkus* who are also their ultimate teachers. The vertical coherence of the reconfigured *communitas* in many ways engenders horizontal competition and dissension – as everyone desires to be the closest one to the *tulku*.

Lungdok Rinpoche at Rachekyi monastery is a Tibetan *tulku* and tantric master who is relatively well-known among Chinese Buddhists in contemporary China. Like other Nyingma communities which welcome Chinese pilgrims and long-term students, his monastery is a haven for tantric fans and practitioners. Meanwhile, it is also a place where vertical bonding with the *tulku* and horizontal rivalry among pilgrims make the *communitas* more dissonant than unified and harmonious. When he was enthroned as the abbot in 1999, Lungdok Rinpoche began immediate work on the reconstruction of the monastery in addition to his Dharma teachings. His dedication to the revival of his monastery and to Nyingma teachings is highly praised by his monastic peers and Chinese disciples. Between 2000 and 2006, he miraculously raised several million yuan to have his monastery reconstructed. It was a highly celebratory period, but was also a time during which his modern *sangha* of Chinese pilgrims played out various dramas – each indicative of the clear dissonance between the vertical *tulku*–disciple relationship and the horizontal pilgrim-to-pilgrim comradeship. In particular, the cash offerings from his patrons are what brought the discordantly cacophonous nature of this Chinese *communitas* to the fore – centered, naturally, upon him. I am not assessing the spiritual authenticity of his Chinese disciples' bonds, but judging from a sociological perspective, I see that a disciple's perceived distance between him- or herself and Lungdok Rinpoche was apparently determined by a quantification of that disciple's offerings.

Everything started with a middle-aged couple from Hong Kong who pledged a one million yuan donation to Lungdok Rinpoche's monastic reconstruction effort. The husband was a corporate CEO, and the wife owned an apparel store. Their relatives from the mainland invited them to a Dharma event at the monastery in the late 1990s, where they took discipleship with Lungdok Rinpoche; the couple has made an annual pilgrimage trip to the monastery ever since. Their monetary

offering had an immediate effect on the speed of the monastic reconstruction. Construction workers were hired to sort through the remnants of the old structure and clear the rubble. Meanwhile, the nuns, village yogis, and pilgrim volunteers contributed their labor to the reconstruction process. Monastery construction in general is an expensive undertaking. The physical structure is only one of many considerations. The most costly items are the murals of tantric icons, gold- and silver-plated Buddha statues, embroidered images of lineage successors, masters, and bodhisattvas, the abbot's and guest lamas' throne-like Dharma seats, intricate woodwork on the columns and beams of the Dharma hall, wool carpets, and the hiring of traditional Buddhist artists, carpenters, goldsmiths, and other skilled individuals in the assemblage of all the above.

The initial one million yuan was simply not enough to complete the reconstruction and the monastery had to get the word out for more donations, as the local Tibetan community is poor. Chinese Buddhists were naturally selected as a potential pool of resources, and soon pilgrims with cash donations in hand began to pour into the monastery. Some came with several hundred thousand yuan, and others with fifty or sixty thousand. These funds were quickly spent on the reconstruction. In the meantime, cash offerings by Chinese pilgrims became the benchmark of one's devotion, giving the impression that the more one gave the more devotion one had toward his or her *tulku*. The pilgrims themselves, and especially those who chose to undertake a long-term stay at the monastery, are the ones who inadvertently created this impression; this inference was not drawn under the influence of Lungdok Rinpoche. The long-term monastic residents behind this impression were the Rinpoche's personal attendants, accountants, chefs, and drivers. They were the ones who would coach newly arrived pilgrims to donate as much as they could. Most critically, they were the ones who determined the scale of Lungdok Rinpoche's reception of the newcomers. Obviously the scale was based upon the availability of cash donations. Naturally, pilgrims who were business owners and professionals with higher incomes were prioritized for reception and the transmission of lineage teachings.

In this respect, the *communitas* of Chinese pilgrims to a Tibetan *tulku* is not a realm of innocence or paradise regained. This particular form of Chinese *communitas* has its own intra-social structure. In addition to the pilgrims' charismatic bonding with Lungdok Rinpoche, they themselves initiate a structure of hierarchy based on material contributions to the monastery. The emergence of this structure was spontaneous rather than pre-meditated, because most of the pilgrims indeed wanted to have the monastery reconstructed. However, as this hierarchy obviously was not based on spiritual merit, eventually it became counterproductive and even destructive to the *communitas*.

One summer, the CEO's wife journeyed alone to the monastery. Several Tibetan nuns and a few Chinese *sangha* members met her out at the highway, as there was no road to the monastery. When the entourage was crossing a shallow but rapid stream, she slipped. Two nuns at once jumped into the stream in an attempt to catch her. Their Chinese counterparts hardly reacted to the situation. The nuns were not quick enough to catch her because of the rapid undertow of the stream,

and she was eventually stopped not less than fifty meters away by a large boulder in the middle of the stream. She was bruised, but otherwise uninjured.

Over the summer this incident became a hot topic among Lungdok Rinpoche's Chinese students, both at the monastery and elsewhere in China. Chinese disciples at the monastery offered help to her without hesitation when she arrived at the monastery in the company of the nuns. Meanwhile, the Chinese residents talked among themselves and spread news of the event to their friends in different cities of China, via cell phones. The simple accidental fall of the CEO's wife became a focal point of intra-*communitas* discussions on the meanings of money, karma, and merit. Many of these behind-her-back rumors were unkind. She never claimed herself as an accomplished practitioner. Unlike her husband, who had a more rigorous schedule of practice, she often told her pilgrim peers that she wanted her family business to prosper and the Buddha and tantric deities to protect her teenage son. However, her family donation to the monastery brought her and her husband closer to Lungdok Rinpoche than other disciples. In fact, they were closest to him among all pilgrims. This close relational bond was interpreted as a spiritual merit allegedly predicated solely upon wealth. In other words, their donation was seen as a transactional exchange of their cash offering for spiritual merit. Therefore, their merit was "purchased," rather than earned from their practice of the tantric teachings. Her fall thus was looked upon as the karmic effect of her "questionable" spiritual merit. Worse than this, her peers turned her fall into an entertaining guessing game about her past lifetimes. The most popular version was the production of a Taoist-turned-tantric practitioner, a middle-aged man. According to him, in one of her past lifetimes, she pushed someone into a river. Therefore, her fall was an inevitable retribution of what she had done before. The nuns did not catch her but the large boulder did, when she fell into the rapid stream. His interpretation was that Buddha Dharma did not save her; her money did.

Those who work closely with Lungdok Rinpoche not because of their "purchasing power" but because of their talents and skills are not necessarily immune from horizontal subversions of *communitas* comradeship. One woman from Hubei Province, after taking an early retirement, joined the monastery as a nun. Her previously acquired skills in accounting and cooking soon became well-known amongst Chinese monastic residents. Lungdok Rinpoche then appointed her as the monastic accountant, to manage the cash flow from pilgrims' offerings and budget the expenses for the reconstruction of the monastery. Because of her hard work, she was soon given more responsibilities to oversee many of the daily affairs at the monastery. Eventually she had the full privilege of entering the *tulku*'s living quarters whenever she wanted to. The tenure of her privilege lasted nearly two years, until one of her peers found an opportunity to oust her. One day, after completing the laying of gravel on the dirt road linking the highway to the monastery, all the Chinese pilgrim volunteer workers were exhausted. Lungdok Rinpoche was away. The privileged nun decided, at her discretion, to treat everyone with hot noodle soup and mutton at a local restaurant as a token of appreciation. Toward the end of the day Lungdok Rinpoche called her, ending her accounting position because she had given permission for the "lavish" meal. Obviously someone in the group enjoyed the meal – but also made a report to

Lungdok Rinpoche. Feeling wronged and without having a chance to explain her decision, she left the monastery early the next morning.

The internal discordance of a *tulku*'s Chinese students also affects the *tulku*'s relationship with the local Tibetan community. Especially since the completion of the reconstruction, fewer and fewer Tibetan yogis and villagers circumambulate the monastery and participate in ritual events. Many of them felt that the Chinese Buddhists took over Lungdok Rinpoche, as he was constantly surrounded by Chinese cooks, drivers, and monastic management personnel. His entourage was comprised mostly of Chinese Buddhists. His Toyota SUV, donated by Chinese pilgrims was too expensive to make him approachable in the village. Many of the village folk were reluctant to ask him to perform rituals at the events of familial members' illnesses and deaths, as nobody could afford the same kind of cash offerings as the Chinese pilgrims. What was worse, Lungdok Rinpoche's Chinese attendants turned away Tibetan yogis and villagers when they wanted to see him. In many ways, he was literally possessed by his Chinese disciples. This "possession" resulted from the Chinese Buddhists' exclusively vertical bonding with Lungdok Rinpoche, and ultimately reflects the dependency of the Chinese disciples on him. This dependency is both cultural and linguistic in nature. Nearly all Chinese pilgrims know very little about the Tibetan language when they enter their Tibetan master's community. It is inevitable that they congregate as an ethnic enclave. However, this enclave is a privileged space which is often given special treatment by their Tibetan host. The late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok allotted rice rations to Chinese pilgrims and held tantric teaching sessions for Chinese novices which were not available to their Tibetan counterparts. Likewise, in addition to designating living quarters for Chinese pilgrims with showers and cooking facilities, Lungdok Rinpoche gives systematic tantric teachings in consideration of Chinese pilgrims' limited time and long-distance travel schedules. Many Chinese Buddhists take this special treatment for granted, without realizing that their privilege often makes Lungdok Rinpoche unavailable for local Tibetan community members – especially when they also bring him back to urban China for Dharma teachings and empowerment rituals during Chinese holidays.

Shortly after the completion of the reconstruction of his monastery, Lungdok Rinpoche decided to take a long-term solitary meditation retreat in a cave of a nearby sacred mountain. The intended one-year retreat extended over two years. The word for solitary meditation is *tsam* (མཚམས།), which means "to shut down." Traditionally, solitary retreat literally means shutting down one's contact with worldly affairs by living in a cave or a cabin isolated from human settlements. The only contact with the outside world should have been one or two persons to prepare food for him. However, Lungdok Rinpoche's Chinese disciples were persistent enough about their need for spiritual consultation to make him permit occasional meetings with visitors to his cave. He commissioned two Chinese attendants to do the screening, while also cooking for him in a small cabin next to his cave. These two Chinese Buddhists, without exception, were devotional to their master but, like many of their peers, competed for a closer relationship with him. Sending in meals, ushering in visitors, and relaying their master's messages back to the monastery were coveted tasks, as in their completion one could indeed

see him on a more frequent basis. Between the two attendants, a similar social drama unfolded whereby one became more dominant; the "losing" attendant gave in because she knew that her tantric practice was at an early stage and her cooking skills a bit poor but did not wish her winning partner to spread rumors about her lesser abilities. The winner then took the advantage to limit her colleague's spatial movement to their cabin, the kitchen, and a mountain stream where their drinking water came from – so that only the winner could be the one who saw Lungdok Rinpoche in his cave.

The chaotic disposition of Chinese *communitas* at Lungdok Rinpoche's monastery is not unique. It takes place in many other Nyingma *tulku*-centered communities in Kham and Amdo where Chinese Buddhists are found. The intra-discordant dynamics of Chinese pilgrims are public knowledge and there is a common awareness of this tendency assumed by many Tibetans *tulkus* and monastic residents. Although many Chinese pilgrims are also tired of this disharmony within their communities, they nevertheless have no solution at hand and continue to be drawn into this apparently endless rivalry for a closer Dharmic relationship with their Tibetan masters.

Liminality, ethnic enclave, and de facto Sino-Tibetan cultural impediment

Edith Turner once remarked, "pilgrimage as a religious act is a kinetic ritual, replete with actual objects, 'sacra,' and is often held to have material results, such as healing" (Turner 1978:xiii). In both Edith Turner's and Victor Turner's ethnographic studies of pilgrimage, a pilgrim on the move toward his or her intended, unmoving sacred object is in process. Their processual anthropology in this regard emphasizes both outer and inner ordeals that the pilgrim experiences in this temporal and spatial movement. The "sacra," manifested in objects, mostly refers to sites of hierophany or openings where divinity meets humanity (Eliade 1959:8). These sites are often monumental in their religio-cultural contexts. Places such as Mecca, Jerusalem, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bodh Gaya, and Lhasa are fixed geographic locations that are characteristically marked with sacred events and the births of saints and prophets. Having been revered for centuries by pilgrims, they are openings to gods and enlightened saints; their symbolic significances encompass divine and spiritual realms which empower pilgrims. Coming into these sites is indeed a process of renewal, revision, reconfirmation, and rebirth. To the Christian pilgrim, the meaning of his or her baptism is enlivened when he or she steps into the city of Jerusalem. To the Muslim, circumambulation of the Kaaba reconfirms his or her total submission to Allah. The pilgrim in this regard experiences oneness with the object of worship, as well as the "Essential We" relationship with peer pilgrims. Both the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of the pilgrimage process are congruent with each other.

The case of Chinese pilgrims entering Tibetan Nyingma sites in the twenty-first century does not quite fit the Turnerian model. The sacrum which the Chinese pilgrim is after is not a fixed object. *Tulkus* are religious specialists who hold and transmit Buddhist techniques of spiritual enlightenment and who

are, sometimes, skilled in shamanic rituals for individual healing and worldly well-being. The sites of their communities are not as well-known as traditional Tibetan sacred places such as Lhasa, Lake Namtso (གནམ་མཚོ།), and Mt. Kailas (Gang Rinpoche). In fact, Chinese pilgrims are not drawn to the geographic sites of the Nyingma communities, but rather to specific *tulkus* themselves who hold the lineages of tantric teachings. The teachings embodied in these *tulkus* contribute to their religious charisma within their local communities and amongst their Chinese disciples. The lineage-based charismatic tantric masters and their methodic teachings are the sacra that are sought after by the Chinese pilgrims. Obviously, the charismatic bonding of the disciple with the master is essential to the pilgrimage process. Being bonded with one's master is a sign of success for receiving authorization, instructions, blessings, and empowerment for one's tantric practice. Thus, the processual aspect of the Chinese pilgrimage to Nyingma teachers and their communities does not resemble the Turners' ethnographic narratives, in which the interaction between the pilgrim and the sacred object is mostly determined by the pilgrim. In the Turners' narratives, a pilgrim's circumambulation and the reverent touching of the sacred object often mark the fulfillment of his or her pilgrimage goals in terms of healing, blessing, and empowerment; one's contact with the sacred object as passage to the divine or spiritual realm is sufficient to prove the success of one's pilgrimage. Although the Turners' pilgrims undergo intense reflection and contemplation with respect to their existential and spiritual states of being, the sacred object, either a historical building or a relic of a saint, does not speak to the pilgrim. Alternatively, the Sino-Tibetan case is an inter-subjective, inter-cultural, and inter-psychic process, because the objects of the pilgrimage are living persons who communicate with the pilgrim in the manner of exercising religious authority, i.e. transmitting lineage-teachings and giving empowerment. The mere physical contact with them is only an initial stage of the pilgrimage. To put it simply, the Turnerian model delineates person-to-object pilgrimage, while the contemporary Sino-Tibetan case involves person-to-person, culture-to-culture, and, sometimes, non-religious-to-religious pilgrimage.

In this respect, the process of Chinese pilgrimage to a Tibetan master is complex. Most of the Turners' ethnographic cases indicate that their pilgrim subjects are religious to start with and that the pilgrims and the sacred objects belong to the same cultural and linguistic environments; thus, there are few noted complications resulting from linguistic barriers and cultural unawareness. Yet even of culturally and linguistically congruent pilgrimages, the Turners state, "each pilgrimage has its own entelechy, its own immanent force controlling and directing development" (Turner 1978:25). The Sino-Tibetan case is rather unique, and has its own pattern and structure resulting from an entelechy all its own. One directing force of the Sino-Tibetan pilgrimage, as discussed earlier, is the vertical charismatic bonding of the Chinese pilgrim with his or her Tibetan master, as determined by *tulku*-based tantric teachings. Another force is the Chinese pilgrim's lack of knowledge and experience with Tibetan culture and language. When a group of pilgrims enter Tibet, the territorial passages are not simply the topographic challenges or particular geographic locations marked as sacred sites; rather, they also

include the cultural and linguistic differences that bar the pilgrims from entering the cultural world of Tibetans.

Indeed, Chinese *communitas* is also an ethnic enclave. When Tibetans are on a pilgrimage in Tibet, their ethnicity is in the background. In contrast, the ethnicity of Chinese pilgrims is in the foreground for both themselves and their Tibetan hosts. When the Chinese pilgrimage to Tibet is seen from a Turnerian perspective, the pilgrim's liminality is not "a tabula rasa, a blank slate" (Turner 1969:103), ready for a conversion or a spiritual rebirth. The characteristic of Turner's sense of liminality is comradeship whose emphasis is on what Turner calls "something of the sacredness" (ibid.:97). In Western scholarly literature, the sacred and the profane are dichotomized. Each does not touch the other. When one invades the other, it fully transforms the otherness from the profane to the sacred or vice versa. Turner's perspective on this dichotomization resembles those of Durkheim, Douglas, and Eliade. In the context of Buddhist pilgrimage, this perceived dichotomy does not always express itself in the bifurcation of the sacred and the profane, but rather in the mutual penetration of both. If the sacredness of Buddhism should dominate everything in the dynamics of the pilgrimage process, the process must be fully born of the soteriological aspect of Buddhism. If this is the case with Chinese pilgrimage to Tibet, the liminality of the pilgrims should ideally be a blank slate – as everything else is shut out, to receive the incoming sacredness of Tibetan Buddhism. However, on the ground level, this is not the case. The Chinese pilgrims' inexperience with and ignorance of Tibetan culture appears as the profane dimension of their pilgrimage, in parallel with their pursuit of Tibetan *tulkus*' sacred tantric methods for enlightenment and worldly well-being. The "slate" is not cleared blank for sacred inscriptions alone. If it is blank, it is meant to be the time and space where both sacred and profane matters leave their imprints.

Not entirely coincidentally, the twenty-first-century Chinese pilgrimage to Tibet in many ways resembles its counterpart in the early twentieth century. Similarities have been found in both of these time periods: the forces of change brought by globalization reshape and transform Chinese society; Western influences saturate the Chinese populace; Buddhist values and practices are re-vitalized and reinterpreted; Tibetan Buddhism is seen as a source of this collective revitalization; primarily individuals from the upper strata of Chinese society take interest in Tibetan Buddhism; and the *communitas* formed around their Tibetan masters is not a "blank slate," but has clear objectives and cultural and linguistic conditions.

The differences between the two Chinese Buddhist assemblages, embarking on pilgrimages a century apart from each other, obviously lie in their magnitudes, volitions, and social manifestations. A century ago, the number of Chinese Buddhists who went on pilgrimage to Tibet was significantly smaller. It was mostly limited to a very few ordained monks, such as the aforementioned Dharma masters Fazhun and Nenhai. The number of Tibetan lamas such as the Ninth Panchen Lama and Geshe Shirab Gyatso who ventured into China for teaching purposes was even considerably smaller, as both Chinese and Western historians have documented (Tuttle 2005). The volitions of the Chinese monks and Buddhist intellectuals of China at that time were ambitious and collective in

nature, as they intended to revitalize what they considered to be corrupted Chinese Buddhism and to advocate Buddhism as the national religion of China. In other words, they hoped that Tibetan Buddhism would be a tonic of China's national rejuvenation and the renewal of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. Liang Qichao, a renowned historian and lay Buddhist of the late Qing and early Republic era, extensively promoted Buddhism as a religion superior to Christianity (1978:12). According to Gray Tuttle's research, Dharma Master Taixu was another politically oriented Buddhist master with reformist aspirations (2005:121) – embodied in his conceptualization of *renjian-fojiao* (人间佛教), which can be translated as "humanistic Buddhism" or "worldly Buddhism." The early twentieth-century Chinese pilgrimage was a highly Sino-centric project, as its focus was mostly on saving China from internal corruption and the external, colonial threat from the West. In this historical context of China's unfavorable geopolitical status and domestic chaos during the first half of the last century, Chinese Buddhism was on the verge of total corruption. Thus, Chinese Buddhists' studies in Tibet were mostly meant for a reawakening of Chinese Buddhism, with a tantric orientation, which was hoped to be a national stimulant toward a modern nation-state. Ultimately this wish was not fulfilled; the Republic of China was replaced by the People's Republic of China and socialist atheism became an integral part of the new state ideology.

On the cultural front, this Sino-centric Buddhist project of a century ago was limited to the élite monastic individuals of China and Tibet. It did not bring forth a popular awareness of Tibetan culture, language, or the customs of the Tibetan people. None of the Chinese pilgrims made it very far into the heartland of Tibet, traveling only to geographic margins such as Kham and Amdo (Tuttle 2005); the Republic of China had limited access to Tibet, despite its claim of legitimacy over Tibet's territory, and the Chinese pilgrims' lack of knowledge about Tibetan language and pilgrimage routes imposed even further limitations upon their mobility within the region. Inevitably, what they brought back to China were mostly Tibetan Buddhist texts and ritual instructions – they returned with very few lived experiences or immediate interactions with common Tibetans. According to Tuttle's findings, this Sino-Tibetan cultural relation resembles the tie between the élites of Tibet and the Manchu Dynasty, which he refers to as a "lateral connection" (2005:16) that excluded any cultural liaison between commoners of Tibet and China. Historically during the Manchu era, Tibetan commoners were connected not to the Qing Dynasty but to Tibet's theocratic ruling system as the center of obvious religious and secular authority (Goldstein 1991). This also indicates that the Manchus did not directly rule over Tibetans, but rather exercised an indirect influence by cultivating a relationship with Tibet which was more similar to that of "patron–teacher," in that Tibetan Buddhism was the court religion of the Manchu rulers. In this bi-laterally imperial relationship, ethnic Chinese were mostly excluded from contact with Tibetans, in spite of the Tibetan lama presence in Beijing documented in Susan Naquin's research on late Qing China. Likewise, although the China–Tibet relationship during the first half of the twentieth century was no longer a "patron–teacher" relationship, the lateral connection nevertheless continued between the élite populations of the Republic of China and Tibet.

A century later, a new wave of Chinese pilgrims is seeking Tibetan Buddhist teachings. This time, the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist interactions are taking place on a significantly larger scale. China in the twenty-first century is rising as a regional superpower and a global economic player with its Western counterparts. Territorially, it has full political and military control over Tibet. It does not need the same national rejuvenation that its Republic predecessor was once so in want of. China's modern nation-state obviously has no need of a Buddhist endeavor similar to that of a century ago. Its socialist ideology firmly grips the current ruling system in which religion has no role to play in the governance of China but, in every way, is a subject under tight state regulation. Religion has been shoved to the margins of Chinese society. While the Chinese population is benefiting from the Chinese state's embrace of the market economy, Chinese Buddhism is also undergoing an unprecedented marketization via tourism. Monasteries have become tourist sites, with a corresponding emphasis on profit, while ordained personnel are frequently accused of corruption – to be discussed further in Chapter 5. Meanwhile, as an inherent part of Tibetan culture, Tibetan Buddhism has rapidly revitalized, especially during the "Tibetanization" era of the 1980s and the 1990s as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Increasing numbers of Chinese Buddhists who wish to receive authentic teachings are turning to Tibet. They may be spiritually prepared, but culturally speaking most of them are ill-prepared. Since the late 1950s, Chinese and Tibetans have been seemingly more closely linked, from the portrayals to be found in the PRC's state-media cultural productions and the narratives of Han Chinese cadres who were stationed in Tibet for one or two decades of socialist reforms. However, this state-mediated "lateral [Sino-Tibetan] connection" between common people on both sides does not bring forth mutual understanding but, instead, one-sided misconceptions, prejudices, and an ultra-romanticization of Tibetan spirituality similar to that occurring in Western popular culture.

The PRC, for the past half a century, has constructed modern infrastructures in all Tibetan regions, e.g. highways and railways. Tibet is under China's full administrative control. This infrastructural development has indeed brought common Tibetans and Chinese physically closer to each other; however, it does not mean that through this lateral connection the Chinese have learned more about Tibetan culture than their counterparts in the Republic era. Instead, they are enveloped in the state construction of Tibetan culture. Just as Tuttle remarks, "the version of Tibetan history that most Westerners know is … overly simplistic" (Tuttle 2005:220); the modern Chinese knowledge of Tibet is probably even more idiosyncratically simplistic. In the socialist production of knowledge about Tibet, traditional Tibetan cultural systems and religious establishments are all lumped together as the "Old Tibet," as called by the Chinese state, which is characterized as "the most barbarous" and "the darkest" social system on earth (Zhang 2009). This manufactured knowledge about traditional Tibet has dominated the Chinese populace's cultural consciousness about Tibet since the 1950s. Then suddenly, starting in the 1990s, Tibetan tantric Buddhism began to gain popularity among the Chinese via the internet and privately circulated Buddhist tracts. However, this popular trend does not comprehend the complexity of Tibetan culture, either;

instead, Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism are highly romanticized in a way that is similar to that of the Western world's virtual Tibet. In this imaginative mindscape of contemporary Chinese Tibetan-Buddhist fans, *tulkus* are elevated as messiah-like masters or spiritual magicians in possession of omnipotent cures for all ills, while Tibet itself is paradise on earth – the Buddhist pureland where all souls find their ultimate solace.

Pilgrimage from the Turnerian perspective, especially in its liminal stage, is deemed "a sacralized enclosure" (Turner 1978:4) where the pilgrim receives initiations. This classic sense of pilgrimage indicates that pilgrimage occurs in places away from villages, markets, and towns, or simply on the social and geographic margins of a given society. In the twenty-first century, this is not necessarily the case. In the case of Tibetan Buddhism, non-Tibetan pilgrims head to wherever they find their masters, whether in villages or in towns or far from either. This has been a non-traditional pilgrimage trend since the latter half of the twentieth century. It is master-oriented, meaning that pilgrims from non-Buddhist countries and regions are seeking the sacredness of Buddhism from actual Dharma teachers. Tibetan masters such as the 14th Dalai Lama, the 17th Karmapa, and Soygal Rinpoche are among the most frequently sought Dharma teachers. This trend is also taking place in China. Tibetan Buddhist communities could be sacralized enclosures; however, they do not necessarily shut out the conventional world of non-Tibetan pilgrims. Much of a pilgrim's subjectivity, mobile with his or her pilgrimage activities, is collective in nature in terms of his or her native cultural upbringing and social practices. Chinese pilgrims are no exception. On one hand, their *communitas* is a liminal phase of receiving tantric initiation and training from Tibetan masters. On the other hand, it is undoubtedly an ethnic enclave, even a miniature of contemporary Chinese society. Thus, this dimension of *communitas* is not what Turner once described with David Hume's "sentiment of humanity" and Henri Bergson's "open morality," in which individuals find solidarity in a "timeless condition" and "an eternal now" (Turner 1974:238).

This leads to another deviation of the *communitas* of contemporary Chinese pilgrims to Tibet, from Turner's model of *communitas* and its diametric opposition of social structure. In theory, Buddhist teachings – especially those concerning spiritual enlightenment – often bear the mark of a renouncement of this world; thus Buddhism appears to oppose the conventional world. In practice, the *communitas* of Chinese pilgrims is woven of an entanglement of the spontaneity of spiritual yearnings and the socio-psychological structures inherent within the pilgrims. On the surface, Chinese pilgrims indeed leave their immediate urban environment and enter Tibetan Buddhist sites. From this angle, it could be said that they are on the margin, or betwixt and between (Turner 1967); thus, their *communitas* "breaks in through the interstices of structure" (Turner 1974:128). However, a geographic margin is not synonymous with the interstices of structure. In Turner's works, social structure appears to be fixed; however, social structure also has a diachronic depth, as Turner notes, "social structure is intimately connected with history, because it is the way a group maintains its form over time" (Turner 1969:153). In addition, social structure has cognitive quality, and "it is essentially a set of classifications, a model for thinking about culture and

nature and ordering one's public life" (ibid.:127). This ordering function of social structure, according to Turner, does not seem to affect the liminal stage of one's pilgrimage, as the pilgrim can leave it behind and re-embrace it at will.

In my ethnographic observation, social structure, like culture understood in its broadest sense, is not fixed but rather highly mobile in the sense of its carriage by the individual members of a given society. It is inscribed upon the (un)consciousness of the individual. It continues to be present in one's *communitas*. It forms its critical mass when enough individuals from the same cultural realm congregate. This is how I see the *communitas* of Chinese pilgrims with respect to *tulku*-based, tantric Tibetan communities, in which spiritual unity and socio-cultural divisiveness simultaneously exist. The unity expresses itself in the vertical bonding of the Chinese pilgrims with their Tibetan masters, while the multifarious manifestations of the divisiveness on the horizontal level reflect the cultural, social, and psychological conditions of religion in contemporary China. The self-subverting dichotomy of the pilgrim's vertical bonding with his or her Tibetan master and the horizontal divisiveness of his or her peers is an ongoing internal condition of many Chinese *communitas* centered upon Tibetan *tulkus*. On one side, it is predetermined by the master-centered Tibetan tantric teachings as well as by interpersonal dynamics taking place when pilgrims compete for closer personal and spiritual relationships with Tibetan *tulkus*. On the other side, the divisiveness mirrors how Tibetan *tulkus* are imagined in a one-sided fashion as messiah-like spiritual magicians free of sentient limitations. In the meantime, the dissonance of the *communitas*' verticality and horizontality echoes the social structure of contemporary Chinese society in which power is concentrated on the Communist Party. This structural reality of Chinese *communitas* inevitably teases out the social psychology of many Chinese pilgrims from the core environment of Chinese society, in which competition among common Chinese citizens for resources and upward social mobility is a norm.

In spite of the commonly anticipated and accepted internal divisiveness of Chinese *communitas*, new pilgrims continue to enter Tibetan *tulkus*' communities. In my observation, *communitas* in practice exists like a shell through which the new pilgrims replace their veterans. Tibetan *tulkus* remain the same, while their Chinese disciples change. In the past eight years of working with Chinese pilgrims and Tibetan communities, I have found that the length of Chinese pilgrims' bonding with Tibetan *tulkus* on average is less than two years. According to tantric teachings, when one takes discipleship with a master, it is a life-time bonding. However, this is not always the case with Chinese pilgrims who often come into Tibet "shopping around" for their masters. They end up having more than they could accept or having none at all. This consumption pattern of Chinese pilgrims is a new development of China's marketplace of religions, in which both virtual and real Tibetan Buddhisms are objects of religious consumers' acquisition. This leads to the next chapter's focus on the marketization of Tibetan Buddhism and the impact of this commercialization upon Tibet.

5 Money, freedom, and the price of charismatic teachings

> Dantseng Dzashi Rinpoche is a reincarnation of Guru Padmasambhava. He is bringing his teachings to Han Chinese … Living Buddha Dantseng Dzashi is traveling to Shanghai, Beijing, Guangdong, and other places, accepting disciples. Those who have truthful faith in tantric teachings may join him. The contact person in Shanghai is Zhouma, at this number …

The announcement of this Tibetan Dharma event appeared on the discussion forums of four Chinese Buddhist websites in the spring of 2003. Based on the instruction of Zhouma, a young woman from Gansu Province, participants were told to meet on a Friday morning in front of two large tour buses in the parking lot of the People's Square in downtown Shanghai. After the buses were packed, she and her boyfriend collected 300.00RMB (Chinese yuan) from every participant for the weekend-long event. After an hour's drive, the buses arrived at a convent in a rural village on the outskirts of Shanghai. Shortly after lunch, Zhouma arranged for everyone to greet Living Buddha Dantseng Dzashi at the front gate. At about 2:00pm, her cell phone rang. She announced his approaching vehicle. In the meantime, her boyfriend was telling the faithful crowd to kneel as a gesture of devotion towards the Living Buddha. A black Lexus pulled up to the front gate. Two young Tibetan lamas in their late twenties stepped out of the car. Both of them looked a bit shocked to see the kneeling crowd. They grinned at each other. The younger lama whispered to Zhouma. She turned to the crowd, telling them to stand up. The processional greeting continued as the young Living Buddha took his seat in the Dharma Hall. The attending lama and Zhouma collected the mounting pile of cash alms, while Zhouma's boyfriend maintained the orderly line …

Two days later, a fresh comment was woven into the threaded discussion forums of the four websites where Zhouma had made her initial announcement. The comment stated, simply: "Two Tibetan youngsters fooled a crowd of ignorant Buddhists in Shanghai."

* * *

In the early twenty-first century, these types of Web-facilitated Tibetan Buddhist events are becoming a noticeable trend among Chinese Buddhists

in urban China, in spite of the fact that cross-regional religious activities are not legally permitted without official approval. In early 2006, the Chinese state released an official survey citing the presence of 4 million Catholics, 10 million Protestants, 18 million Muslims, and over 100 million Buddhists in China (CUFWD 2006). These figures do not include those religious adherents who are not willing to register themselves with the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Of these reviving religious traditions, Tibetan Buddhism has become a popular religious option for non-Tibetans. Its popularity is uniquely discernible from the notable presence of Tibetan Buddhism tangled through the electronic infrastructure of China's global market economy. The market has by and large been a primary means of entrance for Tibetan Buddhism into the greater social realm of China.

Subsequently, I argue that the revival of Tibetan Buddhism in the midst of China's market reform, on one hand, is a process of "creative destruction" (Harvey 2007) closely bound up with practical, if not theoretical, neo-liberalism. On the other hand, it could be also viewed as a dynamic interplay of concurrent creation–destruction, meaning that the market creatively destroys traditional forms of Tibetan Buddhism while it simultaneously destructively creates new forms of Tibetan Buddhism. This duality is galvanized by corruption within certain monastic institutions of Chinese Buddhism and also by what many contemporary Chinese intellectuals call *jingshen-weiji* (精神危机), or a "spiritual crisis" which has become manifest in post-Mao China. Within this context, an increasing number of Chinese Buddhists are embracing Tibetan Buddhism. Harvey's critical analyses regarding the destructive aspects of economic globalization suggest that market-sustained access to religious teachings and practice is causing religions to be transformed into objects of consumption. This is destruction because it reverses the spiritual order of things, and because in this way individuals' inner yearnings for an authentically religious life are exteriorized. Whatever is yearned for in the market bears market value and is commoditized. The profit-oriented teleology of the market inevitably transfigures an initially spontaneous sense of freedom into a commercializing agent. Our case in point substantiates Harvey's theoretical claim, in that the movement of Tibetan Buddhism from Tibetan regions into urban China is paralleled by a significant cash flow tithing the networks of China's market. Spiritual charlatans are emerging from both Chinese and Tibetan lay and monastic populations alike. As more and more Tibetan lamas are drawn towards urban China, they are alienated from their socio-religious context by the force of the modern market. Destruction in this regard signifies the subversion of traditional practices of Buddhism in the Tibetan cultural environment. The most notable trend in this destruction is Tibetan lamas' loss of their religious and spiritual authority to the force of modern consumerism of religion.

When religion is consumed as a product, it becomes inadvertently allied with profit and with materialism. This arouses moral indignation in that such materiality is dichotomous with the ideals of those very religions which are commodified. It is often assumed that world religions are other-worldly in nature, and thus people often attribute absolute divinity or spiritually pure qualities to their practice.

However, these ideals are often betrayed by the actual practice of religions in their popularized incarnations. Religion and economics have never existed in exclusively separate realms. The intimacy between conventional economics and religion is often plastered over by theologically and doctrinally sanctioned acts of "offerings" and "donations." The difference between the traditional and modern economy of religion is that the global material force of the twenty-first century overwhelmingly transforms traditional religious institutions and their spiritual authorities into something other. In such unprecedented transformations, especially in the case of Buddhism, lay practitioners appear to gain leverage and even authority over ecclesiastical authority in a manner which directly corresponds with their relative economic power. In totalitarian countries such as China, the force of the global economy also inadvertently offers religious adherents an opportunity to explore alternative ways of practising their religions so they may dodge direct political suppression.

In this regard, then, I also argue that China's globally linked market bears a creative function for religious practitioners. The market is not merely a system of economy but also creates a spontaneous social space in which the forbidden is accessed and made available without overtly intrusive interruptions of the state. In other words, this creative aspect signifies an emerging freedom of religion not sanctioned by the Chinese state but provided – along with other fledgling public discourses in China – by the market. On the ground level, common Chinese citizens' access to religious practices, as in the case of Tibetan Buddhism, is heavily contingent upon the electronic networks which are the result of and which also facilitate China's market economy. These networks, moreover, necessitate money as one's ultimate material resource. In this sense, this creative aspect is inherently an outcome of the modern market. It exists dialogically with its destructive counterpart.

Marketplace of religion in contemporary China

The dialectics of the state, religion, and market

The revitalization of religions in twenty-first-century China has occurred within the context of the globally connected market economy of China. In his seminal work, *The Red, Black, and Gray Markets in China*, Yang Fenggang points out that the religious economy and the conventional economy of China are both similarly sensitive to changes taking place in the global market (Yang 2008:93). Market-induced changes in religious and conventional economies often lead directly to intra-religious communities' organizational and practice-oriented changes. Yang's dynamic triple-market model encapsulates the current state of religion in the midst of China's ongoing economic reforms and modernization programs. According to this model, the "red market" refers to state-approved religious organizations and practices. It is also known as the "open market," in which all religious activities take place in public (ibid.:96). The "black market" is the opposite of the red market, as it is officially forbidden by the state. It is popularly known as the "underground," synonymously "illegal" or "illegitimate."

Members of organized religions are found in both the red and black markets. Cursorily, religious organizations in the red market benefit largely from state-approved market activities such as tourism. Such activities are in the open because they comply with the state's regulations. Their "redness" is characteristic of being within the realm which is considered "patriotic" and "compatible with China's socialist system" (Wu 2000). Organizations such as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of the Protestant Churches, the Buddhist Association of China, and the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association manifest these "red" characteristics. Legally speaking, they may be trouble-free; however, the price of being in the red market is that the actual authority of their religious affairs lies in the hands of the state, namely with the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Meanwhile, the state requires them to impart "socialist patriotic education" (Zhou 2000:15) upon their members. In contrast, religious adherents in the black market are mostly Protestants, Catholics, and practitioners of newly emerged popular religions such as Falungong which wish to maintain their own religious autonomy. Their organizations are inevitably on the blacklist of the state because they do not comply with state regulations. According to Yang's findings, those on the list are primarily Christian denominations that are not officially recognized by the state (Yang 2006:97). They exist as underground or house churches, and their members meet secretly.

The gray market is the ambiguous area where both legal and illegal religious organizations and their adherents co-exist (ibid.:97). The size of the gray market is unknown; according to Yang's research, however, it clearly fluctuates with the manner in which the state reacts to both the red and black markets. When state regulations of the red market are too stringent and its penal measures toward the black market are severe, the gray market tends to swell with those who are squeezed out of both. What is noteworthy is that religious adherents in the gray market frequently utilize tools of the global market economy, such as information communication technology (ICT), to create their alternative social spaces. The growth of the gray market parallels the developing sophistication of the market economy in terms of both conceptual and technological tools.

Chinese practitioners of Buddhism are among those who find themselves engaged in this triple-market dynamic, particularly in the gray market. Nearly all Chinese cities, towns, and rural settlements have Buddhist temples where monks and nuns are administered by their monasteries in a highly organized fashion within the framework of a monastic hierarchy and precepts, in addition to the state's regulations.

However, lay Buddhists are rarely subject to the same centralized religious activities and monastic membership. Also, unlike their Protestant and Catholic counterparts, lay Buddhists are far less organized. Their religious acts are temple-based but are largely self-initiated and self-directed. So why are many of them discontentedly entering the gray market, especially since lay Buddhists appear to be less regulated, suppressed, and marginalized than monastic residents or adherents of Christianity? Why are many Han Buddhists shifting from Chinese Buddhism to Tibetan Buddhism?

"Dharma crisis" in Chinese Buddhism in the era of the market economy

Since the Chinese state began economic reforms in the 1980s, the revival of Chinese Buddhism, in comparison with other religious revivals in China, has been comparatively successful when evaluated in terms of physical reconstruction and the volume of visitors to temples and monasteries throughout the country. Unlike Christianity, Islam, Taoism and other religious traditions, Buddhism in China, in fact, receives substantial positive sanctions and material support from the Chinese state. Between 2006 and 2009, the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the Chinese Buddhist Association organized two large-scale, international conferences, promoted as "World Buddhist Forums" mirroring the current state of Buddhism in China. The Second World Buddhist Forum, originally scheduled for 2008 but postponed until 2009 because of a series of humanitarian crises and natural disasters, especially underscored the interplay of religion, the state, and the market. Jointly organized by the Chinese Buddhist Association, the Buddha's Light International Association (Taiwan), the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, and the China Religious Communication Culture Association, it was held in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province and Taipei. Over 20,000 participants, 1,700 monastic luminaries, and Buddhist studies scholars from fifty countries and diverse regions joined the Forum.

Geopolitically, the Forum was intended to play an integral role in China's proactively public diplomacy; by design, it was thematically relevant to the "One World One Dream" tagline of the 2008 Olympic Games. In line with the themes of China's other international events in that year including the "Humanity, Development, and Cultural Diversity" of the 16th Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, the Forum's theme was "A Harmonious World: A Synergy of Conditions." This theme also echoed Hu Jintao's presidential mantra – "a harmonious society" (和谐社会 *hexie-shehui*), closely quartered with Deng Xiaoping's governing maxim regarding "the primacy of stability" (稳定压倒一切 *wending-yadao-yiqie*). Both Hu's "harmony" and Deng's "stability" are based on socialism, the official state ideology. In other words, social order in the era of China's modernization and globalization is prescribed by the Chinese Communist Party; however, the image of this one-party rule in the twenty-first century is engineered to seem "harmonious," "diverse," and "synergetic." This effort culminated but was also shattered in 2008 and 2009, when riots and uprisings occurred in Tibet, Xinjiang, Guizhou and other regions of China. The Chinese state's initiating and then postponing the Second Forum all took place before this domestic and geopolitical backdrop; thus, the Forum was apparently a functionary of the Chinese state's public diplomacy.

In addition to its intimate relation with the state, the Second Forum was an archetype of commercialized Buddhism in China. The Forum was held at the Lingshan Buddhist Scenic Spot in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, the largest Buddhist theme park in China. Lingshan is a condensed but elaborate exemplar of the way in which Chinese Buddhism has been commodified since China's economic reforms of the 1980s. The Lingshan Dharma Palace was completed in 2008, costing the

Lingshan Corporation over 160 million yuan (Lingshan.cn 2009). From a distance the gaudy architecture, especially its five dome-like stupas, resembles that of a mosque. Both its exterior and interior impress visitors with extravagant materials of construction and artwork. Shortly after the Forum ended in early April 2009, the Chinese National Bureau of Tourism rated this Buddhist theme park as a top-rated tourist destination. Since then, it has become a landmark tourist site of China and has been visited by over two million tourists (ibid.), becoming a model of economic success for Chinese monasteries.

Since the late 1990s, a popular saying has suggested that economy sets the stage while religion gives the performance, and vice versa (Li 2008a), meaning that religion is a profit-generating instrument. Most Buddhist monasteries in China have been turned into tourist sites, and contemporary Chinese Buddhism is thus caught between the state and market – both of which determine the mode of its existence. Monastic traditions and schedules have been disrupted by tourists, while the state yields a positive image of China's religious freedom. Chinese Buddhism, indeed, has become a *renjian fojiao* (人间佛教), or worldly Buddhism, in a literal sense. More and more monasteries and temples are being managed like conventional, for-profit companies. Liu Yuanchun, Associate Dean of the College of Economics at Renmin University, concurs that contemporary Chinese Buddhism is deeply entangled with the market economy; the economic examples provided in this case are referred to as the "Shaolin Model" or "Lingshan Model" (Liu 2008), signifying the full secularization and modernization of traditional monastic management. Thus the precept and spiritual merit-based governing system of monasteries is being replaced by that of modern corporate management. The Shaolin Temple is known for its worldwide commercialization of its martial arts tradition and its computerized management. Shi Yongxin, the current abbot of Shaolin Temple, is reputed to be the Shaolin CEO and is alleged to be the richest monk in China (Li 2009) – a blatant oxymoron, considering that monks are supposed to renounce worldly gain. Modeling Shaolin's commercial development, the Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai, jointly developed an MBA program with Shanghai Transportation University in 2005. It plans to recruit monastic students from Shanghai's thirty-eight monasteries for specialized training in monastic administration (Zheng 2008). This trend of development among Chinese monasteries conforms to the overall modernization program nationwide. The cornerstones of its profitability are tourism and the increasing religious needs of the common citizens of China.

Other scholars in China have also recognized the existence of the market of religion and its overlap with China's market economy. Li Xiangping, a professor at Shanghai University, remarks that the relationship between institutional religion and religious adherents is a relationship of supply and demand mediated through China's market economy; therefore, the increasing number of religious consumers is in direct ratio with the increasing demand for religious practices in China (Li 2008b:257). However, the material gains of many monasteries appear to far outweigh the spiritual gains of religious adherents, as the volition of ongoing monastic reconstruction and expansion is mostly fixated on economic prosperity.

In this context, many Chinese Buddhist temples' revenue is snowballing and, as a result, many are experiencing internal corruption and mounting criticisms from lay practitioners. In my fieldwork with Chinese Buddhists en route to Tibet, I often engaged in discussions concerning monastic scandals in China which are also widely circulated on the internet:

> "Bikkhu" Shiyinzheng and his family members falsified their monastic precept certificates. They took control of over six million lay donations at Jinhua Monastery in Zhejiang Province. Shiyinzheng fathered a child with a nun while having an affair with an accountant from the monastery's administrative office. He and his family members ruled the monastery between 2002 and 2005.
>
> Chen 2006

On October 15, 2006, Phoenix TV based in Hong Kong aired news coverage about another sex-scandal between "Dharma Master" Shimingsheng, the abbot of Guangxiao Monastery in Guangdong, and his "house-manager," a young widow. Following that coverage, numerous websites also reported multiple sex-scandals at his monastery. In addition to his affair with the young widow, Shimingsheng was also alleged to have fathered a son with a nun from Zhejiang Province. A group of young monks from his monastery also visited a brothel. Shimingsheng currently continues to serve as vice chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association, as the abbot of his monastery, and as a representative of the Chinese National People's Congress (loves7.com 2009).

In June 2009, numerous websites almost simultaneously reported that Shi Yongxin, the aforementioned abbot of Shaolin Temple, had a luxurious robe custom-made by the Nanjing Embroidery Institute. The entire robe was hand-sewn with 18K gold thread. The finished robe is worth over 160,000 yuan. The allegation of this lavish spending on a robe immediately drew criticism from the public. Later, Shi Yongxin made a public statement that he had received the robe as a gift from the institute. Prior to this breaking news coverage, Shi Yongxin had already been popularly known as a super-wealthy "commercial monk" and a "worldly monk." The estimated annual revenue of Shaolin Temple is said to be over 150 million yuan. In 2008, CCTV's news channel aired a fifteen-minute program commenting on his commercial activities. In the interview footage, Shi Yongxin calmly states, "Buddhism does not avoid the world. If it did, it would not have existed until now … " (cctv.com 2009).

Since January 2009, an online article entitled "Exposing the Corruption in Chinese Buddhism," by an anonymous author, has drawn popular attention. It has been reproduced by over 270 other websites. The article gives an analysis of the corruption found in contemporary Chinese Buddhist monastic orders:

> In this era of the Chinese crisis of faith, ever since the 1990s, money is insanely pouring into the coffers of monks and their monasteries. Lay folks have no way to monitor how cash alms are used for Buddhist purposes. They may even condone this monastic money-craze. The general view is that monks have left home and lead a life beyond the cycle of birth and death; therefore, it would not be possible for them to engage in acts of corruption. In the legal

> system of China, the supervision of monastic order has many loop-holes. Corruption in the Chinese Buddhist order is being exacerbated.
>
> loves7.com

This article may be generalizing the current development of Chinese Buddhism in relation to the market economy; however, it does go on quite poignantly to express the frustrations of lay practitioners. While institutional Buddhism is simultaneously experiencing material prosperity and internal corruption, lay Buddhists, especially those who wish to receive instructions to practise Buddha Dharma, are encountering an unavailability and/or scarcity of qualified Dharma teachers. Tourists are inundating their local monasteries, and monks are mostly running between ritual services for family events such as deaths and illnesses, and inaugurations of new businesses.

Aside from tourists, those who visit monasteries are predominantly *xiangke* (香客), or incense burners, in the literal sense. Incense burning as a Buddhist devotional act in the traditional sense is quite like theistic religious practices in which one asks favors from gods by offering things or prayers that please them. Incense burning in contemporary Chinese monasteries, however, has also become part and parcel of monastic corruption – especially during the Chinese New Year. In April 2008, a special panel of several dozens of scholars convened at the Temple Cultural Tourism Management Conference in Beijing; these scholars collectively criticized the corruption behind what is popularly known as the "exorbitant price of burning the first incense." This phrase refers to monasteries' auctioning of the first position on the Chinese New Year to burn incense, and to the monopolizing of this first position by locally powerful officials or their family. One of the most appalling examples cited by panel members was the ￥990,000 first incense auction at Baoguang Monastery in Chengdu, in early February 2007. Baoguang Monastery arranged this public auction as a philanthropic event. The auction lasted merely five or six minutes, according to a few panel participants who were present. It was not the incense that was being auctioned off; what was being commodified was what the monastery called "the right to burn the first incense" on the Chinese New Year. An anonymous young woman ended the auction with her exorbitant bid of nearly one million yuan. Situations like the 2007 Baoguang case were not new to the public. Publicly known cases prior to this include these of Hanshan Monastery in Suzhou, Jietai Monastery in Beijing, and Longhua Monastery in Shanghai. Auction winners were all wealthy business owners.

Many panel participants voiced the same observations about other aspects of the practice of Buddhism in contemporary China – money gains access to monastic "blessings" in the midst of China's development of its market economy. Tong Shijun, a professor at Northeast Normal University, remarks in his blog,

> I think, if 800 million out of 1.3 billion people in China are having money-fever, it is a typical case of money-worship. … It is because if this nationwide money-worship is permitted to grow, unbridled, the consequence must be a total madness of the society.
>
> Tong 2009

Lin Xiji, an investigative journalist with the *International Herald Leader*, a popular newspaper in China, straightforwardly states that Buddhist temples in China are “a chain of profit-making ventures” (Lin 2005) in which business owners, government officials and monastic personnel are bonded to make Buddhism a “gigantic money-machine collecting cash alms from its adherents and corrupted government officials” (ibid.). In this regard, Chinese Buddhism is subjected to economic forces of change as its material prosperity and internal corruption are all taking place within the gray market of religions, which is nested in the infrastructure of China’s market economy. Thus, the Dharma crisis manifests itself in the mounting monetary profit of many monasteries and the inaccessibility of lay practitioners to actual Dharma teachings from qualified teachers. In this regard, Chinese Buddhism is experiencing more destruction than (re)creation.

Spiritual crisis – a psychological state of religion in China

From my participation in Tibetan Buddhist Dharma events in both urban China and rural Tibetan areas, I witnessed the obvious gullibility of Chinese Buddhists as noted in the opening paragraph. Most participants do not question the authenticity of Tibetan lamas or their monastic authorization for the performance of tantric Buddhist rituals. Instead, they appear generous and willing to show their humility in service of these “Living Buddhas.” Due to the Chinese lack of familiarity with Tibetan Buddhist culture, this type of naiveté also characterized Chinese Buddhists of the Republic era when Tibetan lamas toured southern China. In the twenty-first century, a similarly pervasive cultural ignorance continues to exist among the Chinese. However, the attraction of Chinese seekers of spirituality to Tibetan Buddhism is unstoppable. This magnetism is apparently mediated by the spiritually enticing images of Tibetan incarnate lamas in cyberspace, as they do in fact evoke a strong sense of the sacred from spiritual seekers. But the simple appearance of these images cannot give deeper and broader sociological and psychological explanations of why so many Chinese are desperately yearning for ritualized religious experiences. Based on my ethnographic experience, I see this collective desperation among Chinese religious/spiritual seekers as a primary signifier of a popular phenomenon known as the “spiritual crisis.”

Popular discourses on this collectively felt crisis center upon the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, cases of rampant corruption in high-level officials, and intensified consumerism in the twenty-first century. A short essay titled “Do We Still Have a Spiritual Home?” by an anonymous author is widely posted on various privately operated websites. It alleges that China’s spiritual crisis is strongly evidenced by the fallen young generations who are “self-centered and empty-minded,” by the moral catastrophe reflected in the nationwide prostitution of young women, and by the widespread corruption in the upper strata of the government (education.legend-net.com 2005). The author includes his personal encounter with a crisis family: the father sells barbecued mutton on a street corner, the mother sells pirated DVDs and CDs, and their daughter sells her body.

Obviously the overwhelmingly material transformation of Chinese society is a basis of this psychological and spiritual crisis.

Although China is a totalitarian state, its model for economic development nevertheless fits a neo-liberal schema in the manner of its privatization of state industries. In theory neo-liberalism, as David Harvey writes, "proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, free markets and free trade" (Harvey 2007). In reality, China is not a classic case of neo-liberalism as delineated by Harvey, in that it permits extensive legal ambiguity in protecting private property rights and continues its suppressive measures in addressing individual liberty. What qualifies the current social and economic state of China as a neo-liberal case is the continuing process of its privatization of state resources toward individuals within the élite social strata (ibid.) and its full participation in the global economy.

China has undergone thirty years of privatization, almost exclusively pertaining to the privatization of state-owned resources, signifying a transition – or rather a reversion – from China's early socialist collectivization to private ownership in the context of a global market economy. Since the late 1990s, the Chinese state has minimized its public rhetoric of privatization. It nevertheless continues in the twenty-first century with *shichanghua*, or marketization. The social meaning of privatization by marketization is currently evolving beyond the mere redistribution of material resources. In the realm of religious affairs, privatization, paralleling the aforementioned transitional and redistributional process of marketization, refers to the reclamation of the private self from the collectivized, standardized self in the era of China's communist extremism. This private self or personhood is mostly understood as an intangible social entity that can be best defined by an array of amorphous religious terms such as spirit, psyche, and soul. Thus, the inner realm of the individual is evidently invaded by the tremendous forces of the market economy and its dominance over how one re-gains one's private self. Both common people and the nouveaux riches of China experience the same forces of change in their own ways.

Not unlike their counterparts in other parts of the world, economically disadvantaged populations in China bear most strongly the consequences of neo-liberal creative destruction. The market economy in China, most visibly evidenced in the process of privatization, is a direct result of macro-economic structural change. In the meantime, the market also manifests in various forms of street vending and peddling, which allow those who, in particular, have been laid off by formerly state-owned industries, to meet their basic needs. To a large extent, this is indeed a social reality for common Chinese who provide their labor to but do not substantially benefit from the Chinese state's privatization and market reform. A sense of hopelessness roams at large amongst China's working class population and their children.

During the Chinese New Year in 2003, while I stayed in Hangzhou with a Tibetan lama from Kham, I witnessed an encounter of a destitute street vendor with local law enforcement. One cold afternoon, as I was walking in the chic fashion district of the city, I saw six or seven *jing-jing* (经警), short for

"economic policemen," forcefully confiscating a dim-sum cart from a woman and her handicapped son. Apparently, they were "illegal" street vendors that these economic policemen were assigned to clear out. Her pleas were not heeded, and the economic policemen loaded the cart into their van. Suddenly, the woman and child darted out into the street into the path of an oncoming bus, which screeched to a halt two feet from them. Then, both of them dove under the front tires of the bus and refused to budge. Passengers got off the bus and soon the crowd became large enough to create a two-hour traffic jam in the middle of the fashion district. Several people who identified themselves as neighbors of the woman attempted to pull her and the child from beneath the bus. Each time they were pulled out, they ran back to it, crying, "We don't want to live anymore … " Several carloads of traffic policemen arrived on the scene and they attempted to arrest the woman. This immediately outraged the crowd. Many of them formed a wall to block the officers' attempt to arrest her. Several of the woman's neighbors were explaining the cause of this commotion to a plainclothes policeman who appeared to be in charge. Not wanting to incite further outcries from the crowd, he agreed that he would instruct these "economic policemen" to return the cart while the neighbors sent the woman and the child home, to their old apartment building behind the fashion district. As the crowd dispersed, an old woman told several latecomers to the scene that the woman was unemployed while her husband was hospitalized for his severe diabetes, and her ten-year-old son was nearly blind. Apparently, street vending was the only source of family income.

The social phenomenon of the spiritual crisis, in fact, is not limited to economically disadvantaged folk. For many affluent Chinese, this spiritual crisis is not necessarily expressed in martyr-magnitude suicides. It shows, rather, in a personally felt but also commonly shared sense of "meaninglessness" among this growing élite population of China, as if life lost its purpose just as many of the newly rich have reached the apex of their material achievements. At one of the Tibetan Dharma events in a rural area of Zhejiang Province, I met Mr. Liu, a successful entrepreneur in his early forties, who owns a pharmacy chain catering to the farming population of Zhejiang and Jiangsu Provinces. He hires a sizable staff of store managers and licensed medical doctors for his stores in these two provinces. In 1989 he had been a graduate student of a university in Beijing, about to receive a Master's degree in comparative literature. Because of his involvement with the leading student dissidents at Tiananmen Square, however, he was imprisoned for over two years in Beijing's Qincheng Prison for political prisoners.

In the early 1990s, Mr. Liu was released from prison. With a loan from two of his high school friends who had become successful entrepreneurs, Liu developed his currently formidable pharmaceutical business. However, a daily sense of "meaninglessness" has kept company with him throughout the years. On one hand, he still cannot get over his experience of being abandoned by the student dissidents at Tiananmen Square who escaped and moved abroad. On the other hand, he is experiencing an existential fatigue with those around him, especially governmental officials whose administrative jurisdictions heavily affect his business. In one of our conversations at his two-million-yuan house, he lamented:

> Everything has been so meaningless since I got out of prison. My "democracy" friends were hypocrites. They ditched me without even a "goodbye." Those of us left behind had to sit behind the thick walls of the prison. Now, sometimes I feel appreciative towards the government for my success – but it is expensive to entertain its greedy officials. They are all over you as to whether or not your business is successful. Look at me. After these years of dining out with them, I am fat and have high blood pressure, and I suffer from insomnia …

His material success has not brought happiness; instead, he has a raging cynicism toward everything – having seen the base nature of humanity in events and people around him, he finds few ideals in life.

In cyberspace, there are emerging numbers of Chinese intellectuals who post online responses to this nationally felt spiritual crisis. Yuan Zhimin, one of the playwrights of the TV series *River Elegies*, listed five essential factors of the spiritual crisis on a website: "the demise of the national ideology;" "the absence of folk value systems;" "the rupture of traditional Chinese culture;" "the loss of moral conscience;" and "the deserted inner world" (Yuan and Su 2005). He cautions his cyber audience, "The spiritual crisis of Mainland China has reached such a state. If it is not resolved, the Chinese will be beyond recognition and will become a ferocious people" (ibid.). This identification of the spiritual crisis clearly hinges on a primary index – that it exists as a consequence of maintaining Marxism as the state ideology of China, juxtaposed with a rapidly growing consumerism.

In the context of popular culture today, the spiritual crisis directly cuts into individuals' psyches and physical well-being. When the ten percent annual economic growth of China is translated into qualitative terms, it means that people, poor or rich, face overwhelming forces of change that directly affect their psychological and material states. For example, demographically, the recently suppressed religious movement of Falungong attracted unemployed workers and retired people without health insurance (Hu 2006). There is a clear correlation between material instability, and spiritual and psychological breakdown. Having been force-fed party ideology for so many years, to have state systems let them down so severely has forced people to look for alternative psychological, ideological, and spiritual solace. Both folk and traditional world religions such as ancestor veneration Buddhism and Christianity are being revitalized in China – and yet they are spatially confined within so-called "officially registered" places. For contemporary Chinese Buddhists, securing a space for practice is a grave issue because most monasteries have been integrated into the national tourism industry – with all the aforementioned ills that accompany this integration. The emergence of Tibetan Buddhism within the popular realm of China opens a gateway for countless Chinese to seek out spiritual explanations of the spiritual crisis while receiving pragmatic and ritualized methods to deal with it. In the meantime it, too, becomes one of the destructive and greed-induced forces of the market.

Market destabilization of Tibetan Buddhism

The marketing of Living Buddhas and Dharma Kings

Tibetan Buddhism particularly attracts those who have higher incomes and social mobility, such as media professionals, artists, filmmakers, entrepreneurs, mid- and high-level administrators, corporate managers, university professors, and Party members. Its emergence on the religious landscape of China obviously parallels China's development of the market economy. The Chinese fascination with Tibetan Buddhism mostly began with the cyber representations of Tibetan *tulkus* (incarnate lamas). The online narratives and images of Tibetan Buddhist teachers and their communities are obviously yielding great social effects. Since the late 1990s, many Chinese pilgrims have journeyed to Tibetan monasteries in Kham and Golok to seek out the corporeal groundings of these cyber representations, and those who attend Tibetan Buddhist events in their urban locales all personally own or have access to computers and internet services. They are an integral subset of a rising constituency of the Chinese population known as *wangmin*, or "netizens," referring to those who formally subscribe to internet services or those who frequently surf or are registered with various websites of their choice.

The cyberspace of Chinese Buddhist netizenship is only a part of the larger electronic infrastructure of China's market economy. China is undertaking a "digital leap forward" (Hughes and Wacker 2003) as an integral part of the localization of economic globalization. In this regard the Chinese state, as an agent of global economic practice, contributes to the multidimensionality of the recent Tibetan Buddhist revival and its Chinese adherents in cyberspace. Thus, Chinese Buddhist netizenship is a result of this localized globalization which compresses and connects geographic distances as well as differing cultural ideas and belief systems (Tomlinson 1999). This infrastructural compression indicates that virtual Tibetan Buddhism is not a single entity but is instead a composite of many determinations. It is a tension-laden global assemblage where, as Collier and Ong explain, "global implies broadly encompassing, seamless, and mobile; assemblage implies heterogeneous, contingent, unstable, partial, and situated" (Collier and Ong 2005:12). These contingencies, instabilities, or partialities, again, convey a strong sense of a localized global reality in which conflicting cultural, political, and economic forces are interposed and are mutually maneuvered for their own interests. In this context, Chinese netizens' spiritual imagination of Tibetan Buddhism is often susceptible to being turned into commercial capital for profit ventures.

Since the late 1990s, more and more Tibetan Living Buddhas have emerged in cyberspace. Many of their hagiographies, written by Chinese Buddhists, are like appetizers, luring consumers to purchase products related to Buddhist practices. In comparison to the personal narrations of Chinese pilgrims in the earlier stage of the renewal of Tibetan Buddhism in Kham, these hagiographies more often than not provoke a sense of disbelief from their readers regarding the spiritual authenticity of the Living Buddhas represented in the virtual world. For example, Guru Gyagong, a Living Buddha from a lesser-known monastery in Kham, emerged

online as a “Buddha of Wealth Gods” in the summer of 2002. His largest patron is a Buddhist bookstore located in the Tibetan quarter of Chengdu, which offers retail sales of Buddhist publications in both print and digital versions. Its owner also boasts of the store as the largest “Web City of Buddhist Business in China.” In the over 200-page-long hagiography of Guru Gyagong given freely to the store’s customers, the twenty-four previous lifetimes of this “Buddha of Wealth Gods” are meticulously narrated. To my knowledge, he is the first Tibetan Living Buddha who has been claimed as an incarnation of three prominent Chinese historical figures, namely Confucius, Sima Qian, and Emperor Xiaoming of the Eastern Han Dynasty. These Chinese cultural icons are attributed respectively to Guru Gyagong’s second, fifth, and seventh incarnations. The sale of Guru Gyagong’s Tibetan herbal medicine for liver and kidney ailments appeared to be going quite well, on my visits to the store between 2002 and 2004.

From my participation in online discussions and actual Dharma events, I find that the charismatic appearance of a Tibetan *tulku* has more to do with the crowd psychology of the Buddhist netizens than with the personal quality of a given Tibetan incarnate lama. The digitally enhanced charisma is a transpersonal psychic state, rather than a “gift of grace” that only resides in one single individual. This highly impersonalized charisma, set upon the backdrop of China’s rapid development of its market economy, reaches out to a popular imagination of religious spirituality that at once reflects the inner realm of the individual and also begets both symbolic currencies and economic capital.

The commercial deployment of charismatic Tibetan Living Buddhas is a prominent marker of the consumption of religion, the consequence of which is the disjoining of a religious belief and its practice. Vincent Miller says, “When consumption becomes the dominant cultural practice, belief is systematically misdirected from traditional religious practices into consumption” (2004:225). In the case of the Chinese Buddhist netizens’ consumption of Tibetan Buddhist spirituality, money is the primary medium that makes such consumption possible. To be specific, money in the form of cash is the primary indicator of China’s current economic prosperity on the ground level, especially in the coastal regions. From my participation in various Dharma events in Tibetan regions, I estimated that the average amount of cash that a Chinese pilgrim offered to a Living Buddha was between 500 and 1000RMB. In some private sessions, the amount ranged from ¥20,000 cash to a pledge of a wire-transfer of one million RMB or more. It is understandable that it would not be possible for Chinese pilgrims to travel with perishable items as objects of offering. However, with this flood of cash, many leading Tibetan monastic figures are justifiably worried about the fate of their monastic tradition.

While I was in Kham in 2003, I discussed issues of the religious consumerism of many Chinese Buddhists with Lama Gyatso, one of the intimate disciples of the late Menser Rinpoche, a beloved tantric Master based in Golok, Qinghai Province. Without hesitation, he shared with me his thoughts:

> This is a perverted time. Everyone believes that one’s merit comes from money and power. In Tibet, there’s no such thing called “Living Buddha.”

> This was an invention of Han people. In recent years, there are many fake tulkus. Money or political power can buy this title. I dare say, those "Living Buddhas" and "Dharma kings" roaming in Han areas have rarely sat down for practice in their lifetime, and have no sense of enlightenment – though they skillfully reap offerings from countless Han Buddhists who blindly worship their titles. Those who are truly masters of the Buddha's teaching have few chances to offer their teachings to worthy students of the Buddha Dharma. … Now, many new tulkus have surfaced from the earth. … Solitary meditation caves in Kham have been moved to big cities. In the 1980s when Tibetan tantric Buddhism just began to be known by Han Buddhists, the title of "lama" would be enough to win reverence from them. Now, nobody pays attention to lamas. The title of "Khenpo" worked for a while, but it soon lost its charm. Now, "Living Buddha" is the catchy title.

Lama Gyatso is not the only Tibetan teacher who is concerned about the current trend of Tibetan Buddhism in China. Dorzhi Rinpoche, a Geluk *tulku*, is also a critical and vocal Tibetan teacher who has considered this topic. In my conversations with him, he uses the phrase "Dharma minstrels" to characterize the many unqualified Tibetan tantric teachers conducting "Dharma events" in urban regions, suggesting they are "imposters who rip off ignorant Chinese Buddhists in the name of the Buddha." The Late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok also painstakingly tackled issues related to the activities of unqualified lamas traveling in Tibet and China. In a Dharma talk at his academy in 2000 he lamented, "More and more lamas have betrayed their ultimate teachers. Many of them treat their monastic livelihood as a conventional profession. More and more phoney tulkus and khenpos have popped out of the earth to 'teach the Buddha Dharma'" (Sonam Darji 2002). He particularly made an example out of a well-known *tulku* in Golok,

> When some so-called spiritual elders have done some insignificantly beneficial deeds, they would make a big fuss to let the whole world know. For example, when a *tulku* had a large stupa built at his monastery, he took photos and video-taped it, and ran around with these photos all over the country and the world to show himself off. Every time he saw someone, he would tell the person, "Come, take a look at the stupa I built!" He uses this as an excuse to gobble up people's offerings.
>
> ibid.:393–4

In the case of Chinese netizens' religious consumption of Tibetan Buddhism, the presence of money is overwhelming to Tibetan monastic communities in Kham and Golok, especially those small-scale monasteries whose sustenance has traditionally been based on the almsgiving of local Tibetans. The flow of cash pouring into Tibetan monasteries along with Chinese pilgrims is titillating for young Tibetan monks. Since I started my fieldwork in Kham and Golok in 2002, I have seen young monks who went to urban Chinese centers to perform rituals without telling their monastic elders; young monks who attempted to direct

Chinese Buddhists' donations to themselves instead of to their monasteries by replacing their abbots' contact information on monastic pamphlets with their own; and young monks who have made an effort to master ritual recitations without knowing their meanings, doing just enough to make Chinese Buddhists sufficiently satisfied to offer cash donations. Among Chinese pilgrims, this cash flow also engenders divisions. In most instances, those who have more cash get to sit closer to and have more private time with Tibetan teachers, while those who do not have much to offer sit in crowds or wait in line for a few seconds of blessings. In my understanding, the leading Tibetan teachers' concern is that the traditional monastic rules and soteriological goals are being altered, as many Tibetan lamas are attracted to the conventional world of China not for Buddhist soteriological purposes but for accessing material gain.

The reversion of the Buddhist order of things in the market

The rapid development of China's global market economy, in fact, creates various "political vacuums" (Zhang 2001:2) which the Chinese state attempts to take full control over; the state, however, has not yet acquired the technology to successfully seize and ultimately occupy these vacuums. The cyberspace of Tibetan Buddhism is one of these political interstices where regulatory forces over religion are associated more with the market than with the Chinese state, in which the popular demand for religious practices is susceptible to being transformed into a demand for the consumption of religious products, i.e. events and ritual objects. This demand, facilitated by the market, is more destructive than creative to the current revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism. In the case of China, the neo-liberal approach to the maximization of individual freedom in the modern market seems to give a sense of empowerment concerning individual choice; however, the new freedom of religion situated within China's global market coincides with Madsen's assertion that "the freshness of the experience of freedom depends on novelty" (Madsen 2000:313). When the novelty of Tibetan Buddhism is transformed into a market value, it is transgressive for Tibetan monastic traditions.

As previously noted, the transgressive force of the market in the process of Tibetan Buddhist revival mostly comes in the guise of Chinese Buddhists' offerings in the form of cash. The possession of money in the context of China's modernization is not only the indicator of one's wealth but also measures one's social status coupled with one's purchasing power. Such power affords Chinese Buddhists access to the novelty of Tibetan Buddhism. In the meantime, such power also becomes a force of destructive dominance because of its direct connection with China's rising market economy. In other words, instead of being a means of sustaining an emerging freedom of religion, it begins to remold Tibetan Buddhism according to the supply-and-demand equation. Thus, Chinese Buddhists' almsgiving creates purchasing power, more than traditional offerings, for Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and teachers.

Traditionally, Buddhist almsgiving resembles Marcel Mauss' concept of gift economy. The difference is that a true gift economy involves the exchange of

the tangible and the intangible. In my experience, a list of gifts from Tibetan lay folk to a *tulku* could include a scoop of yak butter for the oil lamps in a Dharma Hall, a sack of *tsamba* (roasted highland barley), a bucket of fresh yak milk in the morning, and a sheepskin for the *tulku*'s winter attire. Money does appear on the list, but it would be in the minimum denominations of RMB, such as coins or bills valued from ten cents to one yuan. In turn, the *tulkus* provide the laity with blessings, healing, and various initiation and empowerment rituals. In this respect, the exchange of almsgiving and ritual performance is in accordance with what Chris Gregory refers to as an "exchange of inalienable things between transactors who are in a state of reciprocal dependence" (Gregory 1982:12). In a Tibetan Buddhist community, the inalienability of both tangible and intangible things involved in this gift-exchange pertains directly to the reciprocal dependence between the *tulku* and his Tibetan lay followers.

However, this inalienability is being rapidly breached in the modern market. In the context of religion, money is an issue of morality pertaining to the alleged inconvertibility of what is cherished as sacred. In their discussion of money and the morality of exchange in the modern era, Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch made their assertion from Georg Simmel's perspective, "Anonymous and impersonal, money measures everything by the same yardstick and thereby – it is reasoned – reduces differences of quality to those of mere quantity" (Bloch and Parry 1989:6). This is exactly what is happening to the reviving Tibetan Buddhism in the economic domain of contemporary China. The value of religious spirituality is framed by the highly stereotyped moral attributes expressed in such words as "invaluable," "sacred," "indestructible," "irreducible," or "inviolable." However, the inconvertibility of religious spirituality into monetary value can no longer stand high above everything else in a sophisticated modern market economy such as that of contemporary China. When the experience of that which is considered sacred is enmeshed with money and charisma and encapsulated by digital media, the desire to possess the sacred and the charismatic through the use of money is generated. In light of this reality, the Chinese Buddhists' collective longing for something higher, loftier, more pristine and enlightening is entrapped by the market economy – where a profit-oriented value system saturates and adulterates traditionally supported practices. Thus, Tibetan Buddhism has become one of many collective symbols of longing, and personally felt religious emotions with respect to such symbols are captured by the market and re-deployed for profit.

It is not an exaggeration to state that the fate of the reviving Tibetan Buddhism is in the hands of *tulkus* who have been the ballasts of their own communities since ancient times, both as cultural icons and religious leaders. Neither is it an overstatement that, more and more, contemporary *tulkus* are almost inextricably entangled with the market economy in China – as their images, hagiographies, and even personal presences are being increasingly digitalized, packaged, and marketed as those of "Living Buddhas" by profit-minded Chinese netizens in the name of "non-profit" Dharma events. Without doubt, *tulkus* are trapped in a virtual reality of Tibetan Buddhism as digitally-mediated, fantastic, hagiographic representations. This popular phenomenon resembles what Liah Greenfield deems the "unreflective imitation of the excited behavior of others" (Greenfield 1985:127)

– an appropriate description of the crowd psychology of contemporary Chinese Buddhist netizens who search for empowerment from the allegedly supernatural power of "Living Buddhas." Thus, this electronically mediated consumption of Tibetan Buddhism is fixated upon the brand name of "Living Buddha," based on the expected specialization in performing shamanic magic. This fixation is patterned after secular consumers' fixation with, for example, "Nike" and "Motorola." In this pattern of the consumption of a religion, money is not merely a standard measurement of the value of conventional tangible goods and services. It also grips the emotions and religio-spiritual yearnings roused by digitally-constructed biographies and images of Tibetan *tulkus*.

Therefore, the teleology of Buddhist spirituality is no longer born of an exclusively soteriological orientation; instead, it is also infused with the teleology of the market – that is, maximization of profit through the exchange of commodities. In this respect, the digitalized charisma of a Living Buddha does not exclusively dictate its "charismatically dominated masses," according to Weber's idea of charismatic authority (Weber 1978:1122). The market, in this sense, is a force of destabilization for Tibetan Buddhism. What is taking place with the revival of Tibetan Buddhism is a double alienation. The amorphous alienation of *tulkus* and younger monks from their local Tibetan communities is quantified by the numbers of them who are choosing to become migrant religious specialists, roaming the wealthy regions of China throughout the year. The subjectively experienced alienation of the Buddhist spiritual quality of a *tulku* from his humanity is also objectified, as his lineage is increasingly being quantified and associated with monetary value. The consequence of this double alienation has led to a current phenomenon in Tibetan Buddhism: the hierarchy of objects for offering based on traditional Buddhist values has reversed, and thus money has risen to the apex of this hierarchy. This is what Lama Gyatso meant in saying that this is a "perverted time." Under these current socio-economic conditions, it is not surprising that he lamented the recent religio-cultural trends of Tibetan Buddhism – where the meditation caves of Kham and Golok are being relocated to prosperous urban settings.

Catallaxy and imagined community of Tibetan Buddhists

Market as a haven of closet Buddhists

From the Buddhist soteriological perspective, I agree with the aforementioned Tibetan teachers that the traditionally preserved Buddhist spiritual order of things is being reordered as it comes into contact with the modern market. However, from my perspective as an anthropologist, I also see that the communities of these leading Tibetan lamas have benefited from the cash flow brought in by Chinese Buddhists. Lama Gyatso is currently organizing Tibetan texts into a digital archive in Chengdu. As he is also bilingual, he translates Nyingma tantric texts into Chinese and disseminates them in digital form to Chinese Buddhists – ensuring their continued existence and use. A Han Chinese driver assists his commute between Chengdu and his home monastery in the mountains of Kham. The late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Buddhist Academy was among the earliest

Tibetan monasteries to utilize electronic media to organize events and distribute Buddhist literature. It has been a global Buddhist hub since the early 1990s, when the Khenpo himself went on a world Dharma tour of numerous countries including the US and Western Europe. The Academy's voluminous Chinese translations of Tibetan texts are printed in Hong Kong and disseminated for free on the internet and through private Buddhist bookstores in China. Dorzhi Rinpoche's home monastery has recently added a few majestic Dharma halls and constructed a large square at the entrance with the help of donations from his Chinese disciples.

As an ultimately formless medium, money, in the marketplace of religion in China, fully bears its capacity as "the most terrible destroyer of form" (Simmel 2004:272), but also as the most efficient instrument in turning the formless into form within the context of the current revival of Tibetan Buddhism. Simmel's perspective is a lucid exposition of the moral dimension of money in relation to religion. In connecting religion with money, Simmel remarked "the spirit is juxtaposed to all worldly and imperfect existence as a party, a balancing factor, a specific value, even though spirit as an absolute incorporates everything" (2004:496). In its role as the most powerful medium of contemporary economic exchange, money is an instrument for harnessing the specific value of a given religion – not in the economic sense, but rather in a practical sense in relation to accessibility in a social environment in which religion is highly regulated and thus given limited public space. I henceforth attempt to highlight the creative dimension of money in providing alternative social spaces for religion in China.

In my work with online Chinese Buddhist forums and pilgrims in the Tibetan regions of Sichuan and Qinghai Provinces, I have observed a primitive trait of the market, whether global or local, to form communities of those who share similar interests. From the perspective of Frederick von Hayek, this fundament of the market can be understood as "a spontaneous order of things" – a phrase derived from his alternative Greek nomenclature for an economic system called catallaxy or catallactics. It not only means "to exchange," but also "to admit into the community" (Hayek 1967:164), on a spontaneous basis. This trait of the ancient Greek market system seems to accompany the current neo-liberal construction of a single global market system world over. It permits the use of the networks of the global market for purposes other than profit ventures.

From this angle, I see the rising popularity of Tibetan Buddhism as a catallactic phenomenon of China's market economy; economic development has engendered a diversity of spontaneous communities – including many associations of Web-based Chinese Buddhists, whose religious activities are dependent upon the mechanism of the market economy. This catallactic phenomenon is an integral part of China's ongoing market reform aiming for a full privatization of goods and services which may spell the end of the Chinese state's responsibility for its citizens' basic social safety net including provisions of health insurance and retirement pensions. The existence of spontaneously formed communities and public discourses in China's market system suggests a "new freedom" with "a capacity for personal expression" (Madsen 2000:314) in China's current consumer revolution. With regard to religion, the catallactic aspect of the market materializes

popular yearnings for the reclamation of inner expressions of the spiritual dimension of one's life. The Chinese state's privatization project has inadvertently allowed for the regaining and reprioritizing of the self that was once collectivized through its extensive series of socialist political campaigns. The modern marketplace has become an alternative social space where the answers to questions of the Ultimate Truth are no longer monopolized by the state ideology; instead, the answers are being diversified, as more and more religious websites and communities are emerging.

From von Hayek's catallactic perspective, China's market economy provides an "explosive growth of new venues and modes for socializing" (Davis 2000:14) and a platform for the enactment of religious freedom defined not by Chinese policy makers but by religious practitioners themselves. Thus electronically facilitated Tibetan Buddhism relies on this platform for its formation as a "virtual community of faith," or a "new cybersect," (Thornton 2003) whose methods of communicating are the passages of the "new freedom" (Madsen 2000:313).

In this context, religious expressions are becoming commonplace within the electronic network of China's market economy. In the online world of Tibetan Buddhism in China, the virtual is not necessarily the opposite of the real; instead, it is an extension of the real that stems from the immediate physical locations of different Buddhist netizens. The virtual world of Tibetan Buddhism clearly manifests its purposefulness for spiritual seekers and, indeed, functions as a public medium for the congregation of numerous individuals of religious commonality. To a large extent, this virtual medium ultimately brings real individuals together as pilgrims or as participants in Tibetan Buddhist events in urban settings. The medium has formed an imagined and a real religious community; members from all across contemporary China are united in both the modern medium of cyberspace, created by sophisticated technologies, and in their actual pilgrimage settings.

Chinese Tibetan Buddhists address each other as *jingang xiongdi* (金刚兄弟), or "vajra-brothers," derived from *jingangcheng* (金刚乘) or *vajrayana* – which, in Sanskrit, means the indestructible vehicle of the Buddha's teachings. Both on pilgrimage routes and in online discussions, Buddhist netizens – including women – frequently use this title to address each other. This collective spiritual sentiment is generative, as more and more newcomers come in contact with Tibetan Buddhism in cyberspace and are welcomed by such terms of address. In the context of this process, imagination can precede action. This condition of modernity is increasingly conspicuous in twenty-first-century China, under which "the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action" (Appadurai 1996:7).

The catallactic dimension of the modern market, in my assessment, is the material basis of the "gray market" of religion; it allows for the possibility of varied social acts of religious adherents for actual practice as well as for self-protection from the imminent suppression of the state. This dimension particularly accommodates those who hold positions in government but who wish to practise Buddhism anonymously. Web-facilitated Dharma teachings in urban China and pilgrimages to Tibetan areas take full advantage of this primitive social function of the market;

collective sentiments in the virtual world are validated by the market and then realized in action.

While the common populace of China is experiencing a spiritual crisis, an increasing number of Chinese Communist Party members have also lost faith in communism. In January of 2005, Hu Jintao, the current president of China, openly acknowledged the intra-Party crisis of faith. In a speech entitled "Preserving the Party's Advanced Nature," President Hu remarked that many Party members "do not have confidence in building a socialism with Chinese characteristics, and that some of them are even experiencing a 'faith crisis'" (Cheng 2005). Many of those Party members who have lost their faith have turned to Buddhism, accessed in the gray market, as "closet Buddhists." By "closet Buddhists," I mean that while these individuals have been converted to Tibetan Buddhism, their religious identity not only remains private but is also shrouded by their nominal membership with the Party. Both cyberspace and the actual Buddhist landscapes of Tibetan regions afford them private moments in which they cherish their new Buddhist beliefs. Among the "closet Buddhists" whom I have met in recent years can be found:

- A young official of Sichuan's provincial government who has been promoted several times in the last five years. He neither attributes his career success to his hard work nor does he thank the Party for his upward mobility. Instead, he devoutly credits his Tibetan teacher for his material success. He lives in an apartment complex designated for provincial governmental staff. Quartering his spacious bedroom, he constructed a secret meditation room slightly larger than a regular closet – in which a narrow Tibetan style bed serves as his meditation seat. This compact space is his secret shrine, housing Buddhist texts, Buddha statutes, and his pilgrimage photos. It is a tight space, but is comfortable enough to forget the cacophony of the conventional world. When I joked about his Communist association, his response was, "I only borrow a coat [Party membership] from someone. Don't take it too seriously."
- A couple from northeastern China, in their late forties and dedicated patrons of a Tibetan monastery in Qinghai. Both are Party members; the husband is a film producer and the wife holds an important position in their provincial TV and broadcasting bureau. They designate one of their rooms as the "Dharma room." It is decorated with numerous Tibetan Buddhist paintings and enlarged photos of their Tibetan teacher. After their alarm clock goes off at 5:00am, they go to their Dharma room to recite Buddhist mantras prescribed by their teacher. The door of this room is always shut. Should their son accidentally leave it open, he would be immediately scolded. They both spend the week-long National Day holiday with their Tibetan teacher at the monastery in Qinghai. Recently, the monastery has been renovated with donations from their savings. At the monastery, their appearance is totally transformed, as they wear Tibetan robes for lay Buddhists in stark contrast to their appearances back home as an established local film producer and a cadre.
- A recently retired army commissar, diagnosed with metastatic cancers of the lungs, liver, and prostate toward the end of his tenure in the PLA. Death approaching, he experienced an inner crisis upon retrospective contemplation

> of his life. In particular, he questioned his belief in communism. According to his personal narrative, in the early eighties he had already begun to lose faith in communism, and over the last twenty years, he felt he had not been honest with himself and with his colleagues about his ideological shift and spiritual change. He lamented on a pilgrimage route in Kham, "I was teaching something that I had already lost faith in. It was a painful experience." His cancers in fact relieved him from his military appointment. A friend introduced him to a prominent Tibetan teacher from Kham. In the late 1990s, this teacher formally requested him to take faith in Buddhism before he could perform shamanic healing for him. Now, in remission and healthy, he often says to other pilgrims, "Buddha is my savior."

The spiritual crisis pervades within the popular realm, as well as within the Party. Although the institutionalized Party continues to function as the governing structure of China, it is nevertheless facing the betrayal of its members. This crisis, as indicated by Hu Jintao, is simultaneously a crisis of power and a spiritual crisis. Hu's 2005 nationwide campaign to promote "the advanced nature of the Party" was essentially damage control; however, it did not stop Party members from entering the gray market of religions, adding to the increasing number of religious converts in contemporary China.

Lay* sangha *transforms monastic authority

In comparison with the Republic era, Tibetan Buddhism in contemporary China is unprecedentedly in demand. A spontaneously formed community in the catallactic niche of the modern market is not a separate entity devoid of economic transactions. Precisely because of economic transactions, individuals from different walks of life assemble upon their common interest and desire facilitated by the market. Analysed within the framework of Simmel's sociology of money, it is not Tibetan Buddhism that is the ultimate religious commodity; instead, it is the desire of its seekers which is mostly responsible for bestowing a market value upon Buddhist practices. This assessment may sound odd; however, in the context of China's politics of religion, because the desire for open, unhindered religious practices is being frustrated and often suppressed, any object and/or commodity which can fulfill this nearly-desperate desire becomes the representation of the desire. In discussing the relationship between desire, object, and value, Simmel's insights are pertinent to the case of Tibetan Buddhism in China; he states that:

> … desire by itself cannot bring about value unless it encounters obstacles; … Only the deferment of satisfaction through obstacles, the fear of never attaining the object, the tension of struggling for it, brings together the various elements of desire, the intense striving and continuous acquisition.
>
> Simmel 2004:89

Therefore, when the desire for religious practice is transferred onto an object such as the image of a *tulku* or a tantric text, which represents the intended religion,

the value of the object thus emerges in direct ratio with the growth of the desire. As Simmel puts it, "value is never a 'quality' of the objects, but a judgment upon them which remains inherent in the subject" (ibid.:63); thus, what the consumer acquires is actually his or her own desire for religio-spiritual life mediated through the acquired object. Again, this "subject" (consumer) in China is frustrated and encountering obstacles blocking the expressions of his/her religious/spiritual yearnings.

My discussion so far is not a justification for the ongoing commercialization of Tibetan Buddhism, but rather an attempt to underscore the dual function of the market in the combination of economic transactions and community-making. The former is profit-oriented, while the latter pertains to the sociality of market participants; absurdly, the very basis of their (the participants') sociality is the matrix of profitable economic transactions. Thus money, as the ultimate medium of worldly economics, facilitates profitable exchanges and sustains the social function of the market. As a matter of fact, money possesses what Simmel calls an "inner polarity" with which money manifests itself as both absolute means and end (ibid.:232). For profit-minded Chinese Buddhists, money is elevated as the ultimate end and Tibetan Buddhism is commercialized as a consumer product or a means to acquire it, as opposed to being a means of enlightenment. However, for those who seriously seek an alternative social space in which they practise Tibetan Buddhism, money remains the most effective means toward Buddhist enlightenment because it allows for greater access to teachers and their teachings; herein, the material means and the spiritual end are laced together with one's desire for actual religious practice. In this regard, the existence of religiously oriented sociality in the market is mostly born of the volition of individuals who desire to receive and practise Tibetan Buddhist teachings.

This market-sanctioned access to a religion also explains why most Chinese Tibetan Buddhists come from the segment of China's population which is in the middle or upper class. In comparison with Chinese Buddhism, practising Tibetan Buddhism – especially Nyingma *dzogchen* – requires substantially more time and resources. Going to a temple, offering incense, sutra reading, and meditation are simply not enough. The sequential practice of *dzogchen* begins with these initial steps: seeking a root-teacher; receiving instructions for *ngondzo* (སྔོན་འགྲོ།), or the preliminaries of *dzogchen*; completing the preliminaries; and receiving formal initiation/authorization from a qualified master for practising *nangdzo* (ནང་འགྲོ།), or the esoteric portion of *dzogchen*. All these initial practices actually take quite a few years to complete. In addition to one's pilgrimage trips to Tibetan masters, the preliminaries require that the practitioner has leisure time for the step-by-step, mindful-somatic practices. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in my fieldwork with Chinese practitioners of *dzogchen*, for those who have full-time jobs it takes three to five years just to complete the preliminaries. The majority of the practitioners whom I have worked with chose to complete the rigorous preliminaries because of reported improvements of their mental clarity, bodily health, harmonious interpersonal relations, and even financial success. Many of them also overtly expressed that they were simply "addicted" to *dzogchen*, and that they wanted to make more time available for faster completion of the preliminaries so

that they could move on to the core of *dzogchen*. This high-octane enthusiasm for the experienced efficacy of *dzogchen* oftentimes leads to a reordering of one's life. Some choose to resign from their jobs and move to the monasteries of their Tibetan masters as monks, nuns, or lay residents. Many other urban *dzogchen* enthusiasts want to change their professions to afford more time for practice. It is a common trend that many practitioners leave their office jobs to become small business owners. Those who can afford relocation might choose cities and towns on the Sino-Tibetan cultural border such as Chengdu, Kangding, Lanzhou, Xining, and Xiahe. The forms of small business they cultivate are all Buddhist-related, in the sale of books, Tibetan crafts, and Buddhist ritual paraphernalia. In relation to practice, the trend is that lay practitioners are taking charge of where and when to have Dharma teachings and which masters to invite for teaching events in urban China.

Unlike their North American counterparts who openly congregate at their Dharma centers without government interference, Chinese tantric practitioners are not permitted to establish Dharma centers. Instead, the space of their small businesses creates a shelter for the gatherings of their peer practitioners. Tea houses and vegetarian restaurants are common sites where Chinese practitioners gather for group activities. I worked with owners of a vegetarian restaurant in Hangzhou and a tea house in Chengdu, both of which had implemented identical stratagems in operating their businesses for Buddhist purposes. Besides offering regular services to the general public, they charter memberships for their Buddhist circles, which are referral-based, not open to the public. Both businesses have private rooms which regular customers can use but which can also be closed off for internal Buddhist events. Both owners have their Tibetan masters but are open to other teachers of the same order (Nyingma) in a selective fashion. The tea house owner, a former high school teacher, is an advanced student of *dzogchen*. His Tibetan teacher authorized him to give counseling to those who are practising the preliminaries. On Friday and Saturday nights, the large private upstairs of his tea house is packed with his tantric peers. Unlike those who practise *dzogchen* at Tibetan monasteries, both Buddhist business owners decide their practice routines and select Tibetan masters to meet the needs of their lay communities. The traditionally absolute authority of a Tibetan tantric master is in this respect limited by their spiritual specialties and teaching function. The sustainability of their presence in urban China is thus contingent upon the resources and the discretion of their Chinese lay disciples, rather than being predetermined by their lineage and monastic authority.

Meanwhile many Tibetan monasteries, especially those of the Nyingmapa, are changing their monastic routines to accommodate their urban Chinese students' needs. The dates and formats of Dharma events are made flexible. China's "golden weeks," centered around National Day and Labor Day, are being accepted by many Tibetan monasteries as the annual time slots for their Chinese disciples to participate in initiations or empowerment ceremonies. An increasing number of Nyingma monasteries also have had their websites constructed for the posting of events. Among them, the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Buddhist Academy is most fluent in using Web technology to disseminate Nyingma tantric teachings.

Khenpo Sonam Darje, one of his six initial disciples, is currently the tantric Dharma star in China because of his solid teaching contents and his interactive use of the internet. His Wisdom and Compassion Buddhist Net [WCBN] (www.zhibeifw.com), established in 2006, is both a virtual and real Buddhist community in contemporary China. Unlike many Tibetan monasteries' websites which emphasize the history of their lineages, WCBN focuses on Khenpo Sonam Darje's series of Dharma lectures in audio, visual, and textual formats. All of his over fifty publications are available for free download. In March 2006 he launched online lectures systematically offering his exegesis of Santideva's *Bodhicaryavatara* (*The Way of the Bodhisattva*). This online lecture series lasted until the end of 2008. During this two-year period, pre-recorded visual footage of his daily lecture in Chinese was uploaded to WCBN and made available to Chinese participants nationwide. Advanced students were organized to lead study groups in different cities and towns. Participants were asked to complete homework for each lecture. In January 2009, participants of numerous regional study groups took the final exam for a self-assessment of how much they retained of lecture contents. Shortly after the end of this lecture series, Khenpo Sonam Darje began his tutorial sessions on how to practise *dzogchen* preliminaries. Each session ends with a Q&A for participants with qualified Tibetan lamas through Skype and other online conferencing methods.

Khenpo Sonam Darje's systematic online teaching is drawing Chinese tantric practitioners who are frustrated with the state's tight regulation and the commercialization of Tibetan Buddhism in China. Tibetan Buddhism in China is thus reflexively entering the stage of full utilization of information communication technology, within the infrastructure of China's market economy. With the increasing demand for Tibetan Buddhism among Chinese, the methods used to disseminate traditional tantric teachings will continue to be modified and facilitated by modern technologies. Tibetan monastic authority, possessing absolute power in its home environment, has begun to take on a new image outside of Tibet which is far less authoritarian; instead, it appears friendly and personable. This new image gives non-Tibetans the positive impression that Tibetan lamas are making Dharma friends, not just soliciting cash offerings from laity as their Chinese counterparts do. Most critically, Dharma instructions are not only received in Dharma halls of monasteries but are broadcast with information communication technology anywhere and at any time without the constraints of traditional monastic calendar and formalities. In this manner, the traditional monastic authority of Tibetan Buddhism has been transformed. When it is less bounded by its traditional monastic environment, it takes an initiative to enter the conventional world for more outreach, especially toward non-Tibetans.

The price of religious freedom

In contemporary China, the price of religious freedom increasingly refers to the purchasing power of the individual who yearns for such freedom from state control. Private access to Tibetan Buddhism is situated within the same sociopolitical environment. It is a social reality in China that religious affairs are

highly regulated and that religious institutions and practitioners are subject to the authority of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, the powerful governmental organ determining the social space and time of religious activities. The Chinese state currently only permits religious activities within officially registered religious institutions. Cross-regional religious activities, like Tibetan Dharma events in coastal Chinese cities, are not legally allowed unless they are officially approved. Throughout this chapter, my ethnographic narratives may give the impression that Chinese Buddhists are taking advantage of a growing religious freedom; however, this freedom is limited mostly within the context of China's market economy, particularly its electronic infrastructure and privately arranged spaces.

This limitation is markedly a "Chinese characteristic," in comparison with the way in which privatization is being enacted in market economies of the former Communist states of Eastern Europe. This "Chinese characteristic" has little to do with the features of traditional China; instead, it can be understood as what Gordon White calls "market socialism" (White 1993:233). The socialist attribute of this market economy refers to the legacy of the phenomenon of "verticality," meaning that "each individual and social group was incorporated into a hierarchically organized system of some kind as opposed to belonging to social institutions organized horizontally by their members" (ibid.). In spite of nearly thirty years of privatization, this socialist, bureaucratic verticality continues to hinder the horizontal social relations of the individual citizens of China. This is clearly evidenced by the intimate liaisons between entrepreneurs and China's socialist bureaucracy. As David Wank points out, the state has not retreated during the era of market reform; instead, its localized bureaucratic power has been commodified and has found clientele among entrepreneurs (Wank 1999:9–10). Harvey also offers similar commentary on the peculiar pattern of China's privatization as a state redistribution process: "The Chinese state has followed through a whole series of draconian steps in which assets have been conferred on a small élite to the detriment of the mass of the population" (Harvey 2007). Consequently, this socialist market economy creates the opportunity for high-level corruption, while generating massive involuntary unemployment, forced relocations, and the seizure of farming land for commercial development.

On the religious front, the effects of socialist verticality continue to drive seekers of religious beliefs and practices into the realm of the market for horizontal spiritual relationships where the catallactic aspect of the global market offers a degree of freedom to create community. Marketized religions are becoming mediums for the reclamation of the private self from the previously collectivized socialist self. However, this privatization of the self with a market-defined religious orientation is a process of the exteriorization of one's inner search within the modern marketplace. The object of such inner yearning does not necessarily remain within the course of the individual's search. More often than not, it is gripped by the commercializing forces of the market. This is where the emerging freedom of religion in the economic framework of China is subjected to the creative destruction of the modern market. In this respect, freedom of religion itself becomes a commodity, with a price tag. This price tag degrades the sacred content of a

given religion when it is predicated upon profit only; however, when religious practitioners utilize their monetary resources as a means to serve the ends of their religious practices, they and their religion procure a chance for actual practice. In this manner, Tibetan Buddhism is being accessed as both an object of consumption and a medium of Buddhist spirituality in contemporary China. Meanwhile, an emerging number of influential Tibetan lamas and lay intellectuals are initiating public discourse on the validity of religion, the relevance of Buddhism in modern society, and the self-representation of Tibetan culture.

6 Re-understanding scientism, scapegoating, and the marginality of religion in China from a Tibetan perspective

As Chinese Buddhists bring Tibetan Buddhism into the popular realm of China, many Tibetan lamas are becoming familiar to the Chinese Buddhist public. Chinese Buddhists embrace Tibetan Buddhism because of the ongoing "Dharma crisis" found in Chinese monasteries and the "spiritual crisis" resulting from rampant materialism; they facilitate an emergent dialogue which reflects the concerns of their own cultural background, and bring notable lamas into the public consciousness in this way. Meanwhile, an emerging number of Tibetan lamas are gaining visibility for their active engagement in a public discourse on Buddhism and science. In the West, the dialogue between Buddhism and science has been ongoing for at least thirty years. The Dalai Lama's recurrent dialogues with neuroscientists are celebrated examples. The Buddha's teaching of causality is just as scientific as theories of modern physics, except that Buddhism emphasizes how the intangible activities of the mind generate the tangible activities of the body and speech. In many ways Buddhism is a science of the mind, as Allan Wallace (Wallace 2003), Anne Harrington and Arthur Zajonc (Harrington and Zajonc 2006), and other Buddhist scholars affirm. In my private conversations with some of my Tibetan friends in Northern California, it is often alleged that the Dalai Lama's Buddhist purpose is to increase the public visibility of Buddhism in the West by conversing with prominent scientists. Science is a dominant component of modern Western culture and, oftentimes, is collectively upheld as a sociocultural norm. When Buddhism is accepted as scientific, it has also gained cultural acceptance; thus, this leads to the indigenization of Buddhism in the West.

In the case of Tibetan Buddhism in urban China, the dialogue between Buddhism and science is also a cross-cultural, religious phenomenon – but with an unspoken sociopolitical purpose on the part of the participating Tibetan lamas. This Tibetan-led public discourse aims at the transgressive disposition of the Chinese state ideology, or the Marxist scientific worldview, toward religion. "Ideology," here, specifically refers to communism, atheism, and most notably scientism in socialist China. It, in the cultural context of the PRC, is understood not merely as a work of Marxist political propagation, but, more critically, as a cultural system in the Geertzian sense, in which Marxist atheism has been indigenized – becoming the national consciousness of modern China. This type of collective consciousness condoned a destructive mob mentality toward religious traditions in the past, and continues to be the ideological basis of the state and

cultural (un)conscious of the majority, causing the social marginality of religion in contemporary China. Therefore, in this chapter, I intend to have a psychological reading of the Tibetan-led discourse on Buddhism and science. My argument is that this discourse is a delayed contention with the anti-religious ideology of the state, and that it is a sign of a post-traumatic distress resulting from the attacks on Tibetan Buddhism during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. This Tibetan Buddhist-led public discourse actively critiques the Marxist assessment of religion, and, in the meantime, is inadvertently entangled with Chinese Marxist political and scientific rhetoric as the language of the dominant in the public space of China.

Delayed contention with Marxist scientism

While I was in Kham and Amdo, I met numerous Han Chinese pilgrims from cosmopolitan centers like Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai. Many of them had two books in their backpacks. One was Khenpo Sonam Darje's *A Scientific Treatise on Buddhism* (Sonam Darje 2000b), and the other was Dorzhi Rinpoche's (རྡོར་ཞི་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།) *Wisdom Arising from Compassion* (Dorzhi 1998). Both books, influential Buddhist works written in Chinese and intended for general readership, call for a scientific understanding of Buddhism. Khenpo Sonam Darje's *Scientific Treatise* has not been formally published in China due to censorship, but copies printed in Hong Kong are widely available in the backrooms of many private Buddhist bookstores in major cities. Dorzhi Rinpoche's *Wisdom* has been in circulation for over ten years, since its first edition appeared in 1997. It maintains the status of a Buddhist bestseller in China. I have not met a single Chinese Buddhist pilgrim in Kham and Amdo who did not know the names of these two charismatic Tibetan authors.

Through his active teachings on the website of the Wisdom and Compassion Buddhist Net, Khenpo Sonam Darje has become known as a prolific writer and a socially engaged thinker and is extremely popular among Chinese Tibetan Buddhists. *A Scientific Treatise* first appeared in 1999 on the Academy's website and spread quickly throughout China, especially among Chinese intellectuals and college students concerned about the uncompromising feud between religion and the Marxist version of modern science in China. Khenpo Sonam Darje's main argument in the treatise is that the misnomer of Buddhism as superstition is "unobjective, unjust, and ignorant" (Sonam Darje 2000b:170). He writes:

> Those without wisdom, particularly those who understand neither worldly nor spiritual truths, accuse Buddhism of being superstitious. This kind of thought and speech was very popular in China during the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, people all sank into an ignorant and fanatic state, and stomped both the value of modern Western civilization and traditional Eastern cultures. The labels of "capitalism," "feudalism," and "superstition" were readily stuck upon Western humanistic sciences and traditional Chinese culture. There may not be many fanatics now, but the same thoughts continue to exist in the minds of many people. Those who continue to accuse Buddhism of being superstition should first engage in some serious investigation. If you hastily

> jump to conclusions without any investigation, no matter who you are, you are wrong.
>
> ibid.:170–1

In Khenpo Sonam Darje's analysis, Chinese Marxists overly dichotomized Marxist materialism and Hegelian idealism, and simplistically transmuted this dichotomy into a chicken-and-egg debate between the material and the spiritual. This oversimplification of Marxist materialism failed to recognize the idealistic idiosyncrasy of Marxist thought, and turned anything ideal, especially anything of non-Marxist origin, into a political enemy. Khenpo Sonam Darje remarks:

> The Communist Party members think that they believe in Marxist materialism and that Buddhism is a religion of subjective idealism. As a matter of fact, the philosophy of Buddhism profoundly includes both the material and the ideal and even transcends this set of diametrical opposites.
>
> ibid.:189

His argument logically follows that Chinese Marxists, in their search for the absolute truth of humanity, put themselves into a position of monopolizing truth and how it is sought – as though Marxism is the only vehicle for ultimate human truth. This ideological paradigm permitted the collective persecution of Buddhism as superstition in the past, and continues to socially contain it as a potential political and social disturbance.

Dorzhi Rinpoche is a generation older than Khenpo Sonam Darje. He is both a *tulku* and a professor at one of the universities for nationalities in China which are primarily designated for educating members of China's many ethnic minorities. He holds the highest Tibetan monastic degree of *geshe*. During the period of overt attacks on Tibetan Buddhism in the 1950s and the 1960s, he was imprisoned for a total of twelve years. Trading his sheepskin coat for Chinese lessons from a Han Chinese prisoner who had been a professor from Shanghai, he learned Chinese while he served his sentence. His mastery of Chinese surpasses that of many native Chinese intellectuals. The main content of Dorzhi Rinpoche's *Wisdom* is his exegesis of several Buddhist sutras and the significance of initiations in Tibetan Buddhism. However, he devotes the first thirty-two pages to the restoration of the public image of Buddhism from the Chinese Marxist misaccusation of it as a superstition. Dorzhi Rinpoche, instead of filling up the chapter with vengeful wording, compassionately argues against Chinese Marxist scholars' misleading accusation of Buddhism as an undesirable part of human tradition.

For him, Buddhism is not a political weapon – although the Chinese Marxist scholars frequently look upon religion, including Buddhism, as such. Instead, Dorzhi Rinpoche stresses that Buddhism is an instrument of liberation from ignorance. During my visit with him in the winter of 2002, he said that the first thirty-two pages of *Wisdom* were intended to consciously acknowledge certain human conditions, including those of the fanatical Party members during the Cultural Revolution. He remarked, "My argument for Buddhism is an argument against

ignorance, or against speech, action, and thought based on ignorance. It is because of ignorance that many people during the Cultural Revolution committed brutalities against humanity." The content of this chapter in his *Wisdom* particularly reveals his assessment of the social status of Buddhism in the PRC:

> there exist many skewed assertions in the research on religion, which do not correspond to religious reality. These wrong assertions are imposed upon readers and intentionally misrepresent all religions. Society thus holds prejudice against religion without any explicable cause. … For example, publications like *Theories of Religious Studies* and *The Treatise on Religion* have so many mistaken views about religion, and yet they continue to be circulated and praised by many specialists of religion. Here are some examples of erroneous assertions: "Religion postulates an illusory savior for people, and dupes people to invest their hope in gods and deities with blind faith;" "Religion is a kind of perverted worldview of idealism;" "Religion is blind belief;" "To religion, God sets the order of the world; no one can alter it. Any demand and action for alteration is violation to God. The only thing humans can do is to obey God but nothing else." These statements might be correct if the authors had named particular religions. If these statements are treated as the regularity of all religions, they do not hold up because they are full of personal bias against religion. … Obviously, these irresponsible specialists do not even respect the scientific spirit of their disciplines. They are laughingstocks to serious social scientists. The purpose of my writing this chapter is to clarify these so-called theories of religion and their erroneous judgment upon Buddhism, and to remove the bias against religion that is being circulated in society.
>
> Dorzhi 1998:5–6

According to Dorzhi Rinpoche, all the referred works were written after the Cultural Revolution, not before. The Chinese Marxist view of religion that was prevalent during that time is reverberating through these "specialists" of religion. Both Khenpo Sonam Darje and Dorzhi Rinpoche emphatically maintain that Chinese society holds prejudice against religion with the same mindset as that held during the early stage of socialism in China – an assertion supported by both the official and popular associations of religion with "superstitious" ideals antithetical to the Marxist version of modern science. This phenomenon of Chinese society's relation to religion belies the unconscious operation of systemic bigotry against religious institutions and practitioners.

In my experience with Tibetan Buddhist teachers, I see that the revival of Tibetan Buddhism is not merely a matter of resurrecting the destroyed physical infrastructures of religious institutions and events. The imperative couched within the physically reconstructive acts of this revival is clearly the way in which Tibetan Buddhists are psychologically coping with a religious recovery from the trauma of the Chinese state's ruthless political destruction of religion.

Post-traumatic state of Tibetan Buddhism in China

The voices of Khenpo Sonam Darje and Dorzhi Rinpoche are obviously both calling for justice, either from the Chinese state or the Chinese public; they are calling for an admission that the Marxist justification for the destruction of Tibetan Buddhism in the past was erroneous, and that any Marxist attempt at assessing a vast majority of religious traditions will lay bare the severe cultural limitations of the ideology in this regard – especially in contemporary China. In Judith Herman's clinical experience with victims recovering from trauma, she observes that "remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims" (Herman 1992:1). The voices of these two Tibetan Buddhist teachers are not simply theological arguments against the Marxist worldview of religion, but, more critically, manifest themselves as a process of recovery under unfavorable social conditions in which the justification of the past destruction continues to assert itself. A fundamental element of the healing process from a traumatic experience is that "the victim … asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering" (ibid.:7).

At this point, I invoke David Germano's use of "re-membering" as a heuristic pun, meaning that, on one hand, it pertains to the bodily re-membering of Tibetan religious institutions, and, on the other hand, it refers to a human mental capacity for the resilient recollection and re-organization of traumatic events of the past. History is frequently written in blood. This claim is particularly relevant for modern China. The blood of both Tibetans and Han Chinese was shed in the revolutionary campaigns of the Chinese Communist Party. Tibetans, however, have crossed many more traumatic thresholds than Han Chinese, as Tibet's geographic body was cut into several pieces and allotted to different Chinese provinces; while the Dalai Lama – the ultimate living cultural symbol of Tibet – went into exile, and hundreds of monasteries in Tibet were destroyed. In the midst of the current Tibetan religious revival, this particular type of re-membering of the past is germane to the collective memory of atrocities; the need for such recollection and re-ordering is a recurring theme among many Tibetan Buddhist teachers I have met. Furthermore, this process of re-membering obviously bears the mark of post-traumatic syndrome, that is, "the result of a failure of time to heal all wounds" (van der Kolk 1996:7). Post-traumatic stress is often understood as a normal response to an abnormal condition (ibid.:26). I want to be very clear here, that my use of post-traumatic syndrome is meant to elucidate a collective context, or a social phenomenon, more than to indicate that individual Tibetans are experiencing intense post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In other words, I understand trauma in this case in the broadest sense, that "trauma may arise not only from an acute event but also from a persisting social condition" (Rogers *et al.* 1999:2). Thus, applying the framework provided by a psychological understanding of PTSD, and recognizing that characteristics of the disorder can be manifested socially, allows light to be shed on the path to recovery. Herewith, "re-membering," in addition to its connotation in Germano's usage, also pertains to the return of traumatic emotions and memories of the past along with the expression of delayed contention with

the rationale of the perpetrator. Such rationale continues to manifest itself as one of the acute social conditions of the Tibetan Buddhist revival.

Of the numerous symptoms of post-traumatic stress, I identify two as most prominent, namely “hyperarousal” and “intrusion.” The former refers to a mental state that causes one to be constantly on the alert for the return of the experienced danger, while the latter signifies the frequent intrusion of the memories of traumatic events (Herman 1992:9). In the context of the Tibetan Buddhist revival and the persistently Marxist interpretation of all things religious, hyperarousal is a state of legitimate fear. This legitimate fear is especially palpable when a Dharma event is held without official permission from the county or a higher administrative branch, or when non-Tibetan Buddhist practitioners request long-term monastic residence for training because migrant religious populations are officially forbidden in Tibetan monasteries. After Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok’s Academy was suppressed by the “work team” sent by the Chinese State in the summer of 2001, several abbots of small monasteries confided in me that they felt lucky that they had maintained the principle of transmitting teachings to pilgrims but did not let them stay longer than ten days. The perceived danger of the Chinese state is indeed imminent in that it strikes when it strikes, with or without reason.

In addition to the prevalence of this legitimate fear, memories of traumatic events commonly intruded when my conversations with Tibetan Buddhist teachers touched upon the subject of the modern history of Tibetan Buddhism. Of the Tibetan teachers I met during the course of my field research, most above the age of sixty had been locked up in prison or interned in harsh labor camps between the late 1950s and the 1970s. During his time in prison, Dorzhi Rinpoche was frequently beaten, badly enough that his shirts were often soaked with blood. His memory of the atrocities of the past surface in his exegetical works on Tibetan Buddhist texts. In *The Dependent Co-Arising of Causes and Conditions as an Essence of Buddha Dharma* (2000) he offers commentary of Zongkhapa’s (ཙོང་ཁ་པ།) works; however, the text is also interpolated with Dorzhi Rinpoche’s memories of religious persecution by the Chinese Communist Party. He laments that the collective sentiment created by the Marxist judgment of religion even cultivated “revolutionary activists” among monks. The Chinese Communist Party was not the only entity to blame, because the involvement of many native Tibetans who took sides with the Party voluntarily or involuntarily blurred the identification of the perpetrator. For example, Dorzhi Rinpoche mentions a “revolutionary activist” monk at his home monastery, who hacked down the main Buddha statue from head to toe with an axe. It was a horrendous scene according to Dorzhi Rinpoche’s narrative. However, in less than two years, that monk became mentally deranged. He stopped eating food and started eating his own flesh. Nobody could stop him. He bit off his flesh wherever his teeth could reach. It was a horrible self-destruction (ibid.:184).

The memories of the horrors of the past persistently intrude, as the Tibetan religious revival is taking place within a social context which continues to revictimize practitioners. Khenpo Sonam Darje was a child during the Cultural Revolution. Like Dorzhi Rinpoche, his memory of the past also enters many of his writings for the Buddhist public of China. His *Questions and Answers on*

Tibetan Tantrism (Sonam Darje 2002) is a verbatim record of his dialogue with Dharma Master Jiqün Henan, a Han Chinese monk based in Fujian Province, on the subject of the spiritual impact of Tibetan tantrism on Han Chinese Buddhists. Often, the past surfaces in their conversation. For instance, Khenpo Sonam Darje recalls, "In my memory, many Tibetans during the cultural revolution were forced to participate in the destruction of their monasteries at gunpoint" (Sonam Darje 2002b:150). In fact, half a century later he experienced a recurrence of this same scene – at the Larung Buddhist Academy, when the Chinese state sent in a "work team" consisting of police and administrative personnel to "rectify" the Academy. This recent experience also emerged in his current works published in Hong Kong and Macao, which are circulated on the mainland through private channels. In his two-volume *The Whitecaps on the Ocean of Wisdom* (Sonam Darje 2002b), which documents numerous Han Chinese Buddhists' learning experiences at the academy, Khenpo Sonam Darje often interjects his contention of this recent religious persecution. For instance, he confronts a cadre from the State Administration for Religious Affairs, "Now, those Han Chinese monks who are law-abiding and studying Tibetan Buddhism are not allowed to stay here. How can you let gamblers, prostitutes, and hooligans take over the land of Tibet?" (Sonam Darje 2002b:715).

Recovering from a scapegoat complex – religion as ideological dirt in the PRC

Religion in general has never had an easy time since the inception of the PRC, becoming a kind of endangered species among human cultural practices. Tibetan Buddhism is no exception; as Goldstein points out, "Religion, in essence, ceased to exist in the People's Republic of China" (Goldstein 1998:3). Since the late 1970s and the early 1980s, religious revivals in different parts of China, including Kham and Golok, have been a visible part of the Chinese state's reform program (Goldstein 1998; Mackerras 2003). While I was in these Tibetan regions, I witnessed the lively daily Buddhist routines of common Tibetan folk including their regular circumambulation of monasteries and devotional prostrations in front of Dharma halls. This general appearance of religious revival does suggest that the repressive past seems to have departed from the present. However, those Tibetans who are situated in the core-leadership of the current religious revival are expressing symptoms of post-traumatic stress, almost twenty years after they were "rehabilitated" from their "anti-revolutionary" and "separatist" status. The Chinese state's "rehab" program was, indeed, solely focused on clearing away this all-purpose "anti-revolutionary" label from Tibetan religious figures, for the sake of preparing for global economic cooperation with the Western nations that were once denounced as enemies of the Chinese state. In other words, this "rehab" program was not intended as a public admission of fault for the culturally ignorant and often violent assessment of religion by the Chinese Communist Party. The blame for the past destruction was conveniently directed towards the "Gang of Four" or "extreme leftists" (Bonavia 1984; Brugger 1980), in a type of political exorcism through which the purity of the Party was supposed to be sustained.

Now, with the twenty-first century well underway, China scholars in the West have begun to pronounce the demise of Marxist ideology (Dirlik 1994) and to seek fresh neologisms such as "late socialism" – to mark a new historical era of China in relation to its rapid global economic development, and to indicate the crumbling Marxist superstructure of the Chinese state. Li Zhang states that late socialism signifies "the historical moment in which Chinese society is undergoing a profound transformation under multiple socioeconomic forces: accelerating marketization and privatization, entrenchment of global capital, and *lingering socialist institutions and practices*" (Zhang 2001:2). The emphasis is mine, because my understanding of "late socialism" does not suggest the ending or near-ending of Chinese socialism as an "entrenched" or "lingering" ideology, as Zhang suggests. Instead, "late," in my discourse of Tibetan Buddhism, is invoked in relation to "early" – as a temporal reference embedded with varying political practices of Chinese socialism in different political eras. Thus, "late" is synonymous with the recent or contemporary development of Chinese socialism into an ever more complex force, especially in its continuous effort to socially contain religion with the same Marxist ideological disposition of "early" socialism. No matter what rhetorical garment it is clothed in, this disposition, in my ethnographic understanding, is the abnormal social condition that creates the post-traumatic responses of Tibetan lamas in contemporary Chinese society.

Li Chongfu, a leading Marxist scholar at the Institute of Marxism and Leninism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, vehemently promotes a Marxist scientific worldview against religion, saying:

> Scientific atheism fundamentally opposes vulgar theism. The Marxist scientific worldview is both thorough materialism and scientific atheism. It truthfully points out that the material world is the only reality in which humans live. It does not recognize the world of spirits and supernatural powers.
>
> Li 2003

The current guiding principle for the Chinese state's policy on religion is based on former president Jiang Zemin's "three sentences" spoken at a national conference for the directors of regional administrations for religious affairs in February of 1999. Jiang said:

> On the question of religion, I also want to emphasize three sentences: the first is to thoroughly, correctly implement the Party's policy on religion, the second is to strengthen the administration of religious affairs by relying on law, and the third is to actively guide religion to conform to socialist society.
>
> Wang and Liu 2000:5

The essence of Jiang's three sentences is distilled in the last one. Since his speech at the conference, the Chinese government has administered religious affairs essentially as a long-term conversion project, meaning that it attempts to continue its Marxist atheist education of the young generation while also using

whatever means necessary to lead religious institutions and persons toward a total conformity with Chinese socialist ideology.

My ethnographic reading of early or late socialism in China shares the same sentiment found in R. N. Berki's *Insight and Vision: the Problem of Communism in Marx's Thought* (Berki 1983). According to Berki, the essence of Marxism is not the analyses of class and the capitalist mode of production, but is rather Marx's vision of communism. This reading of Marxism sharply differentiates itself from the academic deployment of Marxism in such theoretical paradigms as Wallerstein's world system theory (Wallerstein 1974) and André Gunder Frank's dependency theory (Frank 1966). Instead, when Marxism is practised as an instrument of politics in the actual social context of China, everything the Chinese state publicly advocates bears this a priori vision of Marx's communism. Historically speaking, the series of political campaigns of the Chinese Communist Party, whether they were "class struggles" or "democratic reforms," were mostly conducted upon the backdrop of this communist vision. As Berki observes, "Communism in this visionary understanding is defined essentially by its purity, its transcendent distance and untroubled totality, its moral quality and its ideality; communism is another world but it is that which this world *should* become" (Berki 1983:4, emphasis added). This has been the palliative measure of the CCP in its attempts to abolish non-communist cultural systems, including various religious traditions. The enactment of this communist vision has turned modern China into a realm of "shoulds," in which human social actions and thought activities have been bifurcated into polarizing extremes – the real vs. the ideal, communism vs. capitalism, revolutionary vs. anti-revolutionary, the material vs. the spiritual, and present vs. future. This collective, split personality of the CCP is an example of a neurosis which is intrinsically a phenomenon of modern civilization. Freud remarks:

> The neurotic creates substitutive satisfactions for himself in his symptoms, and these either cause him suffering in themselves or become sources of suffering for him by raising difficulties in his relations with his environment and the society he belongs to.
>
> Freud 1961:64

In other words, anything and anyone that does not conform to the projected ideals of the neurotic become the source of his frustration and are given the subversive credit that they most likely do not deserve.

This is what happened to the many religious traditions in China in the first thirty years of the PRC. They were readily identified as a tool of the ruling class, based on Marx's assessment of religion in the history of Europe; thus, it was concluded, they should be gotten rid of. In the genesis of this Chinese socialist neurosis, religion became a scapegoat – deserving of violent political cleansing. In its original Hebraic sense, the term "scapegoat" is related to Azazel, a goat god, biblically known as "the goat that departs" and "hard rock," or "the strong one of God" who carried the collective sin of the Hebrews (Perera 1986:19). Azazel is honored because of its atoning and healing role. *Tizuiyang*, or "scapegoat," is

a modern Chinese neologism resulting from Chinese Christians' exegetic effort, and it literally means "the goat who surrogates the crime of others." It is based on biblical stories of the Hebraic style of atonement; however, the type of scapegoating that the Chinese Communist Party committed against religion resembles a riddance ceremony in which "the evil is treated concretely, as if it were a contagion that could be drawn off into a material object which then becomes – on the concrete, literalistic level of magic consciousness – an incarnate pollution that can be disposed of" (ibid.:11). In other words, the Chinese Communist scapegoating of religion was a process of anal rejection during which scapegoats, the targeted social "evils," were excreted from society, much as feces (ibid.:13). China's Cultural Revolution was a revealing example of scapegoating as a riddance ceremony, considering its treatment of religion and religious adherents. To be noted here, modern scapegoating has little to do with its biblical origin, in which the scapegoat was an atoning medium of "purgation, purification, [and] confession" (ibid.:11) in the sense that the departure of the scapegoat with the collective transgressions of a community could heal and reunite the community. The sacred dimension is lost in the vulgar usage of scapegoat in modern societies where scapegoats do not possess this noble quality to begin with. René Girard points out that the modern usage of scapegoat is a generative process of collective psychology in which scapegoats are "blamed or punished not merely for the 'sin' of others … but for tensions, conflicts, and difficulties of all kinds" (Girard 1987:74). This generative process can, indeed, be identified as a scapegoat complex in which "reality is perceived through a distorting rigidity that equates consciousness and judgmentalism" (ibid.:36), and, thus, everything is arbitrated in black and white terms. In other words, this scapegoat complex in modern societies like the PRC tends to monopolize the public understanding of collective morality in oversimplified and judgmental terms. What does not conform to the "shoulds" and "ideals" of this scapegoat complex is destroyed as an enemy or purged as poison.

Moreover, the generative process of modern scapegoating is, more often than not, fantastic and unconscious in nature. On the surface, the Chinese Communist Party, as a scapegoater, had an explicit Marxist rationale in the process of its persecution of religion with "orgies of violence" (Germano 1998:90). However, like Girard, I also discern the non-conscious dimension of this scapegoat complex, meaning that "the choice of the victim is arbitrary, and the causal link between the victim and whatever disaster is ascribed to him is not real" (Girard 1987:88). When religion was given the credit of being an instrument of the ruling class in the Chinese Communist revolution, it was, indeed, being looked upon as something more powerful than it actually was. I do not suggest that the Tibetan religious institution of the past was without power abuse, but wish to point out that the Communist attribution of religion as a total instrument of oppression was (is) an over-generalization. For instance, none of the Tibetan *tulkus* I met, especially those of Nyingmapa in the mountains of Kham and the grassland of Golok, who were persecuted between the 1950s and the 1970s, could have been associated with the so called "ruling class" in the Marxist sense. Those religious individuals, outside of their lineages of Buddhist teachings transmitted from their predecessors, were mostly born of common nomadic origin and hardly controlled any

means of production, and yet they were severely punished for crimes that they did not commit.

What this type of scapegoating generated was collective violence bred of a mob mentality (Girard 1987:16) against arbitrarily chosen enemies like religious institutions and practitioners. This is a pattern of Marxist socialism the world over; as Terry Pickett states:

> Socialism is obsessed with greed … though it generally assigns that vice to a class of human beings rather than to general human nature. By externalizing its chief vice, it is able to vilify an outsider group as a pariah "class" that must be eliminated.
>
> Pickett 1996:19

The Cultural Revolution, a heightened example of this mob mentality, created a situation in which the majority of Chinese citizens were involved in persecuting "social poisons" like religion. Marxist ideology, as the initial belief system of the Chinese Communist Party members, became the quintessence of this mob mentality. The majority, as the collective persecutor, was often possessed by a fantastic conviction that "a small number of people, or even a single individual, despite his relative weakness, is extremely harmful to the whole of society" (Girard 1987:15).

If I may use Mary Douglas' expression, the mentality involved in this scapegoating process is an obsession in "chasing dirt," as she notes, "Dirt … is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (Douglas 1969:35). In the social realm, dirt thus bears more symbolic meaning and more implications than those derived from its physical presence. It essentially mirrors the symbolic system of purity. Religion has been spotted as a type of "dirt" that cannot co-exist with Communist ideals. Thus religion, regardless of a diversity of forms and soteriological goals, began to be indiscriminately purged like a speck of dirt upon the political domain of the PRC. Needless to say, religion – as dirt – was looked upon as a defilement threatening the purity of the Chinese Communist vision. Douglas notes, "Defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas" (Douglas 1969:41).

Without exception, Chinese Marxism in relation to religion relies on a scapegoat complex that has manifested itself as a cultural system, possessing boundaries, margins, and internal mechanisms to repel reflexively what it considers to be defiling elements. In retrospect, the iconoclastic mob mentality of this complex against religion can be understood as a collective, obsessional neurosis – a process of transference of the weaknesses and deficiencies of a new Communist nation-state onto its imagined enemies. According to Karen Horney's psychoanalysis, the obsessional neurotic:

> must be the center of attention, must be the most attractive, the most intelligent, the most original – whether or not the situation calls for it. … He

> must come out victorious in any argument, regardless of where the truth lies. … The compulsiveness of the neurotic person's need for indiscriminate supremacy makes him indifferent to truth, whether concerning himself, others, or facts.
>
> Horney 1950: 30

The pathology of the Chinese Communist Party's obsessional neurosis has repeatedly progressed in a series of mimetic frenzies concerning its conflicting relationship with the West. When the cultural outcomes of Chinese Communist political campaigns are scrutinized, it is not difficult to recognize that modern China has been caught up in a series of political and economic mimeses, in light of the Chinese Communist Party's desire to ape the material achievements of the West – as expressed by the "Great Leap Forward" of the 1950s and the recent modernization program emphatically pronounced as the socialist material civilization (MacInnis 1989:420) by Chinese Communist leadership. Again, this type of desire is an inherent property of Marx's communist vision; it is delusional in nature because what is desired is actually an illusory world rather than a possible future. What this communist delusion introduced to modern China has created a chain reaction of mimetic desire, mimetic frenzy, and mimetic rivalry (Girard 1972:147–48). The simultaneous imitation of the West's material achievements and the rivalry against the West's ideologies resulted in collective violence that would have erased the decadent past and ameliorated the miseries of the present. In a word, these frenzies further contributed to the unconscious dichotomization of the world of "shoulds" and the world as is. The Party literally represented itself as the "savior" of China, in a one-sided and sadistic fashion. Carl Jung observed, "If heroism becomes chronic, it ends in a cramp, and the cramp leads to catastrophe or to neurosis or both" (Jung 1977:33). The noticeable symptoms of the CCP's "heroic cramp" are repression, indifference, aggression, and near-zero tolerance of difference. This heroic cramp has been justified with the Marxist worldview, and is indeed an ideological sclerosis caused by the obsessive and hardened efforts to harness power. Paul Ricoeur commented on this type of sclerosis:

> Just as religion is accused of having justified the power of the dominant class, so too Marxism functions as a system of justification for the power of the Party as the avant-garde of the working class and for the power of the ruling group within the Party. This justificatory function with respect to the power of a dominant group explains why the sclerosis of Marxism provides the most striking example of ideology in modern times.
>
> Ricoeur 1991:246

Now, late socialist China no longer engages in class struggle; however, it has inherited the basic ideological tenets of Marxism, especially in its treatment of religion as potential and/or actual subversion of the Chinese Communist Party. Since the Chinese state's "reform and opening" in the early 1980s, its fear of religion continues with the same rigidity as that of three decades ago, though this rigidity is externalized in perceived dangers other than class. Journals on

religious studies issued by government research institutions are an official platform to consistently signal that religion is a political disturbance if it is not "well" administered. For instance, Tong Taijing and Zhang Rui, two young Communist scholars at the Central Chinese Communist Academy, reiterated the CCP's rhetoric of the 1950s and 1960s by making an emphatic point – "It is still a daunting task to resist hostile foreign infiltration into our country through religion" (Tong and Zhang 2002:6). In the recent writings of other Chinese scholars, religion is also looked upon as a medium of hostile foreign infiltration (Guan 1999; Pu and Can 2001). The logic of the Chinese state's suppression of late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Academy lies in the CCP's fear of and resulting intolerance of religion. Thus, it is not surprising that the Party has maintained its Marxist position on religion even in recent years:

> Along with the development of socialist material and spiritual civilizations, people will continually grasp the secret of the natural world and their destiny, and lean toward science and rational thinking for the understanding of the objective world, the motion of life, and the essence of religion. *This will help religion walk to its final demise*.
>
> UFWD 2003, emphasis added

To put it simply, the current Tibetan Buddhist revival is seen as an abnormal social condition that is destined to meet its end on death row as sentenced by Marxism.

The origin of superstition in China's politics of religion

When the Chinese state sent in a "work team" to reduce the monastic population at Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's Buddhist Academy in 2001, I was subsequently refused entry into Larung and, amidst a crowd of Chinese pilgrims, found myself on a bus to Chengdu. Sitting next to me was a woman accompanied by her five-year-old daughter. During the course of this long bus ride, she told me why she had decided to go to the Academy in hopes of becoming a long-term resident. She had been a disciple of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok for three years. According to her they were not easy years, as her husband was a Communist Party member. He looked for every opportunity to stop her Buddhist practice, resorting to physical abuse. In May 2001 she divorced her husband, after he had held a cleaver to her throat in front of their five-year-old daughter, demanding that she renounce her Buddhist faith. According to her, the violent rhetoric of his harassment was constructed of a series of remarks on religion as superstition.

This young mother was not the only contemporary Buddhist practitioner who had experienced the violence of the Communist idea of "superstition" as both a political and social stigma. During the two-day bus ride back to Chengdu, I met two Han Chinese brothers who were ordained as Tibetan monks at Larung. They felt rather fortunate that they were only told to leave the Academy instead of being arrested. One year previously, they had been raided by a team of policemen while performing an empowerment ritual for a group of twelve individuals, aged between seven and seventy-five. The charge was that they had violated the rule

that religious activities be held only within the perimeters of officially registered religious institutions. Everyone was handcuffed, including the seven-year-old. They were locked up in a cell with homicide suspects and robbers. Soon, every single one of them was severely beaten by the inmates. Although the wardens could hear their cries for help, they not only ignored them, but were overheard to say, “Teach those superstitious people a lesson …”

Mixin (迷信), or superstition, is a condemnation often invoked in relation to religion in the PRC – in spite of the fact that the revolutionary years are long past. The social meaning of “superstition,” in the short history of religion in the PRC, goes beyond the Chinese lexical definition as “blind faith” or “blind worship;” it pejoratively connotes stupidity, ignorance, and deviation from the orthodoxy of modern science.

In China, the everyday use of the term “superstition” is exempt from an explanation of its meanings. Upon closer inspection of the origin of the word *mixin*, it is in fact not found in main lexicons of the Chinese language such as *Cihai* (辞海 *The Encyclopedia of Phraseology*) or *Ciyuan* (词源 *The Encyclopedia of Word-Origins*). My hunch is that the word was a neologism coined during the era of European missionary activities in China, perhaps in the late nineteenth century. This speculation is based on my comparative reading of the definitions of the word by both the Chinese state and the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Broderick 1976); they propose strikingly similar identifications of superstition. The United Front Work Department, the powerful branch of the Chinese state’s propaganda, states:

> Superstition generally refers to the blind belief or worship of persons or things. Divination, face-reading, fengshui, fortune-telling, communicating with the soul of the dead, and dream-readings originated and became popular in the feudal times of the long history of our country. Customarily, these activities are called feudal superstition.
>
> UFWD 2002

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* lists idolatry, divination, and occult arts as the principle species of superstition (Broderick 1976). The inherent teleologies of these two identifications of superstition in two different cultural contexts differ from each other; however, both classify a set of “undesirable human behaviors” which are suspected to breed ignorance, irrationality, and deviation from alleged universal truths. As the Roman Catholic Church worked to eliminate the presence of pagan belief systems that did not concede European authority to the church, the Chinese state has attempted to do away with age-old traditions and practices that do not place their allegiance in the sovereignty of the PRC. Furthermore, the Chinese state’s pervasive propagation of the orthodox definition of superstition illuminates a striking feature of the Chinese governance, which I call a “monotheism without a god;” it does not permit any form of ideological idolatry. In relation to religion, this “monotheism” holds firmly to its ideological belief in Marxism as the moral justification of its legitimacy and its sanction against religious practices. Marxism, as the state ideology of the PRC, is becoming ever more complex – as a canonic system used to

govern the religious affairs of its subjects, and as a cultural system that exercises self-censorship and conformity to the language of the modern Chinese state.

The fourth issue of the *Journal of Tibet University*, 2003, published a young Tibetan scholar's short article "On the Question of the Adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism to Modernization." She passionately writes:

> The biggest dross of Tibetan traditional culture is the word – superstition. Superstition is the obstacle to the emancipation of the mind; superstition is an impediment to conceptual transformation; superstition is the negative element in the economic construction of Tibet; superstition is the spiritual shackle of Tibet's social progress. Superstition affects the propagation of science, hinders the proliferation of technology, and fetters people's minds. It is the source of Tibet's lagging behind the modernization of the motherland and the world. If superstition is not eradicated, science will not flourish. Thus, the progress of Tibet and the prosperity of Tibetans are only hollow talk. If we want to make an effort to preserve the splendid Tibetan tradition, we must construct the new socialist culture. For the progress of Tibet, we must do away with superstition and revere science, and must rely on ourselves and build our own happiness.
>
> Dekyid Drolkar 2003:41

Throughout her article, the author implicates Tibetan Buddhism as superstition and forecasts its inevitable modernization through a process of secularization and rationalization (ibid.:42). This is the primary sociocultural condition under which the Tibetan Buddhist revival is taking place, and with which numerous Tibetan teachers are painstakingly negotiating and contending for the full restoration of Buddhism as a legitimate cultural practice.

Buddhism in the language of the powerful – a religious ideology?

In addition to the label "anti-revolutionary," the word "superstition" was a highly charged, all-purpose political weapon used against religion in the modern history of China. It is an all-encompassing legal, ideological, and popular term including "a range of activities such as fortune telling, shamanistic trances, casting horoscopes, exorcising evil spirits, geomancy, and physiognomy" (Goldstein 1998:2). The term has a twofold presence in contemporary China. On the governmental level, it continues to be operative in the Chinese state's regulatory activities over religion. On an equally pervasive level, it has become a reflexive response among common Chinese citizens in relation to religion. I would further identify it as a sort of Foucauldian panopticon (Foucault 1995) implanted in the minds of countless individual Chinese. This collective mechanism of surveillance seems to relieve the Chinese government of direct responsibility for numerous current cases of religious persecution on the *jicheng*, or the "ground level," a term referring to the lowest stratum of the Chinese state's administration.

My juxtaposition of these "ground level" experiences of "superstition" with Tibetan Buddhist teachers' discourse on religion and science is meant to reiterate that, in spite of the positive effects of recent Chinese policy adjustments, these incidents clearly show that the association of religion with "superstition" has become an aspect of collective unconscious in modern China. In the past, the political deployment of "superstition" by the Chinese Communist Party provided coarsely oversimplified, but effective, justification for a mob mentality in service of the popular destruction of religion. Now, the cultural embeddedness of the pejorative "superstition," on the subconscious level, bears essentially no difference from the collective mentality of the scapegoat complex discussed earlier – except that it is currently in a dormant state. This slanderous accusation can be activated at any time under any circumstances, on both a governmental and a popular level. Tibetan teachers like Khenpo Sonam Darje and Dorzhi Rinpoche are helping to raise critical consciousness about this unconscious assumption, for a healing purpose. This dimension of "re-membering" Buddhism is more challenging than the re-membering of the physical infrastructures of Buddhist monasteries. Both Tibetan teachers' re-visiting of the term "superstition" is obviously intended to distance Buddhism from this all-purpose political tool, and, in the meantime, to salvage the Chinese public from this destructive, (un)conscious mentality toward religion in general and toward Buddhism in particular. After all, the modern historical destructive force against Tibetan Buddhism originated uniformly from the Han Chinese population and the clear systematic scapegoat complex justified with the Marxist worldview.

Marxism, as a matter of fact, is the focal point of Tibetan Buddhist teachers' public discourse on religion. Dorzhi Rinpoche begins his Wisdom with seven points:

1 Buddhism opposes blind faith but advocates the faith of knowledge and wisdom.
2 The goal of Buddhist faith is not necessarily to enter paradise after death.
3 Buddhism fundamentally negates the existence of a creator which rules over the universe.
4 The philosophy of Buddhism is not completely idealistic but is realistic as well.
5 Buddhism is not indifferent to social realities.
6 Buddhist ethics do not serve the morals of the ruling class.
7 Buddhism does not oppose science.

Dorzhi 1998:1

It is apparent that the subtext of these seven points is both a practical disclaimer and a negation of the extra-textual political and cultural misperception of religion as something "blind," "dark," and "anti-science." Words like "science" and "scientific" frequently appear in the writings of both Dorzhi Rinpoche and Khenpo Sonam Darje. Both of them represent Buddhism as a human science and a spiritual science (Dorzhi 1998; Sonam Darje 2000b). Khenpo Sonam Darje goes further to declare Buddhism as the religion of humankind, quoting former Sri

Lankan prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's remark on Buddhism – "As long as the sun and the moon continue to shine and as long as humankind continues to live on this planet, Buddhism will also prevail because Buddhism is the religion of humankind" (Sonam Darje 2001:167). However, the painstaking efforts of both Tibetan teachers and their Buddhist fans in China are often bogged down by the Marxist dichotomy of the material and the spiritual. Participants in websites like "The Great Perfection" (http://bj2.netsh.com/bbs/94063/) and "Science–Philosophy–Buddhist Studies Net" (http://www.confucius2000.com/20century/marxfjgfjmarxg.htm) often engage in lengthy discussions on what Marxism has to say about Buddhism.

The first chapter of Dorzhi Rinpoche's *Wisdom* is often a topic of heated discussion. One participant in the Great Perfection's discussion forum opined:

> In my view, one of the biggest achievements of Buddhist studies in 20th-century China was the exposure of the essence of Buddhist dialectics because of the influence of Marxism. Also, Marxism should receive the credit for the advocacy of the Buddhist pragmatic spirit. … I think that the development of Buddhism toward social engagement and rational thinking bears the influence of Marxism in the contemporary China.
>
> GP 2000

Another participant cited Ren Jiyu, the late leading Marxist scholar of religion, to make his point:

> It [Buddhism] was a part of the superstructure in India and meant to serve the classes of slave owners and feudal landlords. Its theories were used to numb the people of India and exterminate the will of their resistance. The harm of Buddhism in China was that it practically blurred the boundaries of class and weakened the will of the resistance of the oppressed class. … The slogan "all sentient beings have Buddha Nature" is the opium for all oppressed people, and its anti-revolutionary nature has far surpassed its literal meaning …
>
> Li 2001

The gist of these Marxist voices centers upon the diametrical opposition of the material and the spiritual – as if Marxism is solely this-worldly, while Buddhism is other-worldly. There is, of course, the assumption that Marxism is the culmination of all human thought and that it alone answers all questions about human existence, in light of its reliance on a materialist understanding to the exclusion of the spiritual.

In the West, materialism and idealism are just two "isms" among many. However, in the PRC the juxtaposition of these two words often automatically teases out the uncompromising opposition embedded in the minds of Chinese citizens who have completed at least a secondary education, in which this uncompromising Marxist dichotomy saturates the yearly curriculum. Both words, as a matter of fact, are equally existentially threatening, because of the obvious either/or relationship between the two. In my assessment, in service of the Chinese

Communist Party's persistent "thought-reform" for this either/or choice imposed on the Chinese public since the middle of the last century, the Party adopted direct translations of these two words from either English or German; this linguistically shows the Party members' one-sidedness to native Chinese. "Materialism" is officially translated as *weiwu zhuyi* (唯物主义), or "material-only-ism," while idealism is translated as *weixin zhuyi* (唯心主义), or "mind (or heart) -only-ism." Notably, both neologisms are derived from a Chinese Mahayana Buddhist term known as *weishi* (唯识), or "consciousness-only," which represents a branch of Buddhist thought established by Xuanzhuang, a Tang Dynasty tripitika monk. In addition to the ideological one-sidedness of Marxist materialism in modern China, this unconscious, linguistic one-sidedness further widens the unbridgeable chasm between Marxist materialism and whatever idealisms it opposes. Thus, according to the Chinese Marxist worldview, what is "real" is only sought in material terms, and thus religion defiles the Marxist vision of communism because of its spiritual and ideal orientation.

Historically, chasing religion out of the socialist sphere as though it were a speck of ideological dirt, the CCP doggedly extolled Marxist materialism as the truth of all truths via a rigidly conceived version of modern science. Shiping Hua identifies this representation of modern science as *scientism*; that is, a political ideology which treats science as "omniscient, omnipotent, and the bearer of man's salvation" (Hua 1995:15). Adherence to scientism has generated violence in the past, and continues to exert its ultimate authority over religion in China as heralded in the CCP's prophecy of the inevitable death of religion. In essence, scientism has little to do with the spirit of the modern science which the CCP advocates, but is a representation of the dominating power of the Party in Marxist-scientific terms. Furthermore, the general population's conflation and confusion of scientism with the authority of the Chinese state reinforces the Chinese Marxist worldview as an operative cultural matrix – making acceptable the social marginalization, if not a complete extermination, of religion. This is again the primary sociocultural condition under which the Tibetan Buddhist revival is taking place, and with which numerous Tibetan teachers are painstakingly negotiating and contending for the full restoration of Buddhism as a legitimate cultural practice.

It is inevitable that, in the process of reclaiming the public legitimacy of Buddhism, both Khenpo Sonam Darje and Dorzhi Rinpoche frequently cite the texts of Marx, Engels, and others to argue for the positive social value of Buddhism. To be noted here, the passages cited are counterpoints to the statements against religion found in the works of Marx and others, in which Chinese Marxist specialists of religion frequently quote maxims such as "religion is the opium of the masses," while failing to register the concessions of Marx and Engels themselves in addressing the matter of religion. For instance, both Tibetan teachers cite what Engels says about Buddhism, "Buddhists are at the higher stage of rational thinking" (Sonam Darje 2001:190; Dorzhi 1998:405). In fact, they have developed a textual strategy of citing Marx's and Marxist texts to affirm the social and cultural legitimacy of Buddhism under the political and cultural circumstances of the PRC. Here are some examples that are translated from both Tibetan teachers' writings in Chinese:

> Marx –
> "Dialectic materialism in Buddhism has reached a fine degree" (Sonam Darje 2001:166).
> "Religion is a theory about the totality of the world, and includes principles of all sorts" (ibid.:190).
> "Everyone should have the opportunity to realize his or her religious needs, just as one has to fulfill corporal needs without the interference of police" (ibid.:195).
>
> Engels –
> "Humans' dialectic thinking reached its maturity at the Buddha Sakyamuni's time" (ibid.:191).
> "Great philosophies like that of Hegel, which have contributed to their national spirits, cannot be erased by our indifference" (Dorzhi 1998:4).

Dorzhi Rinpoche went a step further in representing Buddhism as a type of atheism that shares some commonality with Marxist scientism, as he writes in *The Dependent Co-Arising*:

> As soon as science appears, generic religions perish with the exception of Buddhism. The development of science is in the process of proving the validity of the Buddhist worldview. Other religions usually accept the existence of "god," but Buddhism criticizes this "god" to start with; thus, its death has utterly no impact on Buddhism.
>
> Dorzhi 2000:110

This observation may be true of other traditions of Buddhism. In my ethnographic experience, however, Tibetan Buddhism is dynamically polytheistic with a complex pantheon of Buddhist deities and bodhisattvas imbued with supernatural capacities. In addition, the historical Buddha himself was never an atheist in the modern sense but emphasized the sacred dimension of life in the language of enlightenment. His contemporary disciples regarded him as "the teacher of both gods and humans" (Ñanamoli and Bodhi 1995:88). On the political level, the death of "god" pronounced by Chinese Marxists between the 1950s and the 1970s, in fact, had a destructive impact upon Tibetan Buddhism, as discussed earlier. My interpretation of Dorzhi Rinpoche's statement is that it was written with the textual strategy of making the appearance of Buddhism "politically correct" with the state ideology.

The heart of Tibetan Buddhist teachers' discursive activities is not so much about the philosophical tenets of Marxist scientism and materialism, but rather pertains to the unfavorable social condition under which the current Tibetan Buddhist revival is taking place. Again, this is a post-traumatic issue assuming the guise of a benign public discourse on science and Buddhism. In contemporary, late socialist China, the Marxist worldview continues to be the guiding principle of the CCP in its administration of the religious affairs of its subjects and, in the meantime, persists as the dominant cultural matrix of the PRC. The Marxist

ideology toward religion is a cultural system in the Geertzian sense, meaning that "the function of ideology is to make an autonomous politics possible by providing the authoritative concepts that render it meaningful, the suasive images by means of which it can be sensibly grasped" (Geertz 1973:218). In the context of religion in China, the persuasive effort of Marxist ideology has been the type of scientism mentioned earlier, which has simultaneously borne some salvational hope for those who live wretched lives, and reinforced a political justification for the Marxist ruling class to "manage" those who are emancipated from their previous social system.

In this regard, Marxism is far from dead in a late socialist China where religion is re-emerging in the common social space. Marxism, in fact, takes the form of Bourdieu's *habitus*, which "produces individual and collective practices" (Bourdieu 1977). In particular, the Marxist *habitus* toward religion in modern China possesses some dispositions that are best expressed in Bourdieusian terms, as follows:

> dispositions are inculcated in a durable way: the body is literally moulded into certain forms, so that the *habitus* is reflected in the whole way that one carries oneself in the world, the way that one walks, speaks, acts, eats. The dispositions are 'transferable' in the sense that they are capable of generating practices in fields other than that in which they were originally acquired.
>
> Thompson 1984:53

In other words, the Chinese Marxist *habitus* has engendered its own social language and a set of modern scientific glossaries, which, in fact, dominate the thought-activities of the Chinese populace in relation to religion. This social language, more often than not, operates in an unconscious fashion and resembles what Bourdieu calls *doxa*, as the "universe of the undisputed" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:168). In the past, this social language gave justification for the extensive mob violence that targeted religion, and is still capable of repeating that past if needed. At present it continues to function as a symbolic violence, or a social mechanism reinforcing self-censorship, as shown in Tibetan teachers' use of Marxist scientific terms. This type of symbolic violence is, indeed, a paradoxical form of reconnaissance *sans connaissance*, as John Thompson delineates:

> the reproduction of symbolic domination presupposes that speakers dispossessed of the dominant language collaborate in their dispossession, accepting that the dominant language is the "legitimate" one … the recognition or acceptance of dominant values or norms as legitimate is rarely a free and fully conscious act on the part of the agent.
>
> Thompson 1984:61

Thus, in my ethnographic understanding, it is unavoidable that Tibetan teachers like Khenpo Sonam Darje and Dorzhi Rinpoche would experience the intrusion of past traumatic experiences while they speak of Buddhism in the Marxist scientific language that is, in essence, the language of the state ideology. In

this respect, the Tibetan teachers' "scientific" representation of Buddhism is a self-defense strategy with which they can openly claim the social legitimacy of Buddhism in China.

Tibetan Buddhism as a litmus test of the socialist panoptic modernity

The pervasive nature of the state ideology as a cultural system in contemporary China is a conspicuous consequence of socialist modernity. Herein, I use Lisa Rofel's phrase "panoptic modernity" to describe this outcome of Chinese socialism. In her *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism* (Rofel 1999), Rofel coins this phrase to highlight the subject-making process in late socialist China in light of constructs of self-discipline and self-surveillance. She characterizes the effect of this panoptic mechanism as "pervasive, anonymous, and productive" (ibid.:258). Derived from the discourse of knowledge, power, and subject in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1995), Rofel further explicates the effect as a panoptic gaze that is "a gaze that never stops gazing" (Rofel 1994:258). This corresponds to Foucault's initial description of the panopticon as an omniscient presence of surveillance embedded in French prison architecture, as he says, "The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen" (Foucault 1995:201–2). The center of this panoptic gaze in modern China extends into its peripheries and into the subjectivity of the subject without ever being noticed, as the result of many years of compulsory Marxist education and political campaigns. The subjects, in this case, are transformed into individual panopticons, viewing society through the official lens. In other words, when the whole is broken into pieces, its essence retains its identity in multiple parts.

The violent years of the Chinese Communist revolution have receded into the past; however, its regime of subject-making remains the same and is becoming ever more panoptic, especially in relation to the social position of religion. When the state ideology transforms itself as a cultural norm, it is "a system of meanings and values" (Liu 2000) which, in turn, produces individuals with the same norms and an acceptance of the same cultural matrix. During the revolutionary years of China, as Liu and Dirlik both point out, the new language of Chinese socialism was replacing the traditional one (Liu 1994; Dirlik 2002) by means of a series of politically violent acts, including those of the Cultural Revolution. Physical violence condoned by this state ideology has transfigured itself into symbolic violence embedded in its authoritarian and canonical position in the state's management of religious affairs.

This current Tibetan Buddhist revival is a litmus test within late socialist China, the significance of which lies in a recognition that the current social marginalization of religion in China is not only a direct result of the Chinese state's continuous suppressive policies toward religion, but also, most critically, that it bears an intrinsic connection with the highly secularized, Marxist, atheistic worldview held by the majority of the Chinese populace. This historical development is

inarguably unprecedented. However, in the current scholarly studies of religion and the Chinese state, there is a noticeable tendency to trivialize the way in which the Chinese state treats religion with such suppositions as "Looking back over a thousand years of Chinese history, one finds little new about today's pattern of relations between the state and religion in China" (Bays 2004:25), or "there has never been a period in China's historical past in which the government of the state, in imperial and post-imperial form, has pursued a neutral policy toward religion, let alone encouraged, in terms dear to American idealism, its 'free exercise'" (Yu 2005:3). These suppositions are counterproductive, because they give an impression that it is rather futile to engage in meaningful examinations of the relationship between the contemporary Chinese state and religion. Herein, I do not wish to debate the historical accuracy of these suppositions, but intend to elucidate that in the history of religion in China, there had not been a single dynasty or a state that launched a campaign attempting a thorough eradication of all religious forms, until the inception of the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, except for the PRC, there has not been a dynasty or a state in the political history of China that used both bureaucratic and legal means to engage in nationwide "thought reform," wishing to convert all its subjects to a single (imported) political belief – that of communism.

An understanding of the current state of religion in China has to be placed in a global context. The social marginalization of religion is undeniably a result of the globalization of modernity, and particularly that of Marxist modernity. The secularization of Marxist socialism as the Chinese state ideology, in fact, has been a national conversion project to "a global Marxism" (Dirlik 1994:31). The current form of such secularization is what the Chinese state describes as "the socialist spiritual civilization" whose essence is communist ideology (Zhang 1996:44). This global Marxist modernity in China is also a system of representation, in the Durkheimian sense, which involves both externalization and internalization. The former is undertaken with the venues of propaganda of the Chinese state, while the latter is manifest in the social and psychological impact of this representation upon the individual citizens of the PRC. This political system of representation also continues to represent religion from the ideological perspective of Chinese Marxist atheism, as I discussed earlier. Tibetans under the rule of the PRC have been caught within this globalizing modernity, as their Buddhist culture has been torn away by "modernism and Communism" (Germano 1998:90). The current Tibetan Buddhist-led discourse on religion in China exposes the lethality of a modern worldview based on Marxist atheism. Its effort to rescue religion from the mire of Marxist-alleged "superstition" is revealing enough to expose the social marginality and the adverse cultural condition of religion in China.

7 Buddhism, ethnic nationalism, and destigmatization of Tibet in the cyberspace of urban Tibetans

While Chinese Buddhists and their Tibetan Dharma masters actively utilize the internet and other modern media to facilitate Buddhist teachings and public discourses, urban Tibetans pull resources together to construct their version of virtual Tibet. Many of them, upon receiving a modern education in China, have become faculty members of universities and research institutions, administrators, writers, filmmakers, and Communist Party members. The presence of Tibetan Buddhism among this group of Tibetans appears to be instrumental in articulating Tibetan identity and expressing the emotions of their ethnic nationalism in the context of contemporary China. Urban Tibetans' search for "Tibetanness" is an animated and emotional collective work. The most notable articulation of "Tibetanness" is the claim of a primordial Tibetan cultural identity based on Buddhism, made by several leading Tibetan intellectuals. Among Western scholars, the notions of culture and civilization are rapidly becoming de-essentialized and de-primordialized. However, parallel to this de-reifying process of culture and civilization, newly emerging national identities, on the ground level, are expressed in the language of essentialization and primordialization. Contemporary Tibetan intellectuals' primordialization of Tibet is a telling example of modern ethnic nationalism.

In this chapter, I wish to recapitulate three prominent aspects of the public expressions of Tibetan ethnic nationalism through Tibetan Buddhism via the internet and other modern media. First, I would like to point out that while China's internet-filtering technology is becoming more sophisticated, urban Tibetans in China are also learning to advance their cultural, political, and economic interests in the political matrix of the Chinese state. In this respect, urban Tibetans' version of virtual Tibet is becoming increasingly instrumental in the re-education of China's general public about Tibet's history and culture from a Tibetan perspective, divergent from the Chinese state's dualistic image of Old Tibet and New Tibet. Second, in relation to scholarly research on contemporary Tibet, I argue that the public space of China, representative of Tibet, has never been "value-neutral" (Barnett 2006:36) as some scholars have suggested. Furthermore, the portion of the public space in which Tibet is represented is not only saturated with the moral and ideological values of the Chinese state, but also witnesses the emerging voices of Tibetans, particularly those who were trained in Chinese institutions and continue to work and live in the cosmopolitan areas of China.

Although China continues to subject public space to the dominant framework of its state ideology and legal apparati, the parallel existence of ongoing state censorship and rising Tibetan popular voices is forging a dialectic relationship – the dominant and the subaltern. Finally, the current Tibetan intellectuals' use of Tibetan Buddhism in their national expressions is what John Comaroff calls neo-primordialism. Neo-primordialism refers to a type of modern ethnic nationalism in which the promotion of a time-immemorial ethnic identity is also an instrument of resistance to external threats (Comaroff 1996:164). The cultural and political enactment of this neo-primordialism hinges upon self-representation as a form of contestation with the externally represented ethnic identity used by the dominant. In the case of Tibetan intellectuals in China, their active self-representation is emotionally and sentimentally expressed. The basis of this collective self-representation is what Anthony Smith calls a "myth–symbol complex" (Smith 1986:15–16), which allows for a Tibetan national narration of "Tibetanness" with a sacred character based on Tibet's Buddhist civilization. However, the primordially constructed Tibetanness is often not a lived experience for many Tibetan intellectuals, though it is an integral part of latent ethnic sentiment that erupts when the ethnic identity is threatened.

Commotions in imagined Tibet

On December 15, 2006, Phoenix TV, a broadcasting conglomerate based in Hong Kong, aired a twenty-minute talk show on "the Tibet Question," hosted by Li Ao, a Taiwanese writer and popular "shockjock." Born in the same year as the 14th Dalai Lama, Li Ao is known in Taiwan for his eccentric and maverick rhetoric. Throughout the program, Li Ao lashed out at Tibetan culture and religion. To his Chinese-speaking audience tuning in from the 142 countries and regions covered by Phoenix TV's satellite signals (Yu 2006), Li Ao animatedly imparted the following:

> Tibet is a place of demons and ghosts. When they [Tibetans] came to Taiwan for their Buddhist exhibitions, they displayed Buddha statues in copulating positions. This so called Buddhist culture is, in fact, not true Buddhism. … Let me tell you – when the Dalai Lama ruled Tibet, 95% of Tibetans were illiterate. These 95% of Tibetans were serfs. They were both religious and economic slaves. … In Potala Palace, there is a hole. What was it used for? The Dalai Lama's excrement went down this hole, flying down to the street. Common Tibetans rushed to take possession of his excrement. Why? They believed it could treat illness as medicines. So, Tibetans ate his excrement. They were ignorant to this degree. I think those who want to have spiritual comfort from the Tibetans are mentally retarded. Today, I am showing you the evidence. This evidence shows that the merit of the Chinese Communist Party on the Tibet Question is extraordinary. It did require a surgical removal of Tibetan theocracy …

Li Ao's inflammatory comments have drawn protests and emotional responses from many Tibetans in China. Tsewang Norbu, a contemporary writer and the

Chief Editor of Tibet Culture Net, the largest Tibetan-operated website in China, took the lead in responding to Li Ao's criticism. On March 3, 2007, he posted an open letter to Li Ao on his website:

> Tibet has a message: Mr. Li Ao, please take no step further on the way of demonizing Tibet! … Speaking of darkness in history, which nationality does not have this side? Lu Xun once said, "Opening the history of China, what one sees is cannibalism. Its five-thousand-year history is a history of barbarism." Of course, you are not comparable to Mr. Lu Xun. … What we Tibetans admire and seek is a nation with peace, harmony, mutual respect, the unity of all nationalities, and civility. This is not one person's desire, but the most basic conscience of our humankind.
>
> Tsewang Norbu 2007

Between March and December 2007, Tsewang Norbu's letter was viewed 6,756 times and received 337 comments. Most respondents were Tibetan college students, scholars, writers, and artists living in urban China. Their responses were almost uniformly laden with emotional expressions of anger and disbelief in Li Ao's credibility as a celebrity writer and, most critical of all, as a man who alleges sympathy for those living on social margins. Now, Li Ao is being called "a thug" (Somothong 2007), "an ignorant media mastiff" (Liu 2007), and "a pervert" (Aowang Gyatso 2007).

Li Ao's broadcast fed into the Chinese state's ongoing typecasting of traditional Tibet as a revolting sample of human oppression and decadence. In February, 2007, China's Central News and Documentary Studio released *Tibet in the Past*, a 900-minute long documentary series depicting the "horrific" social system of Old Tibet. The thematic purpose of this documentary, according to China's Tibet Information Center, is to refute the Westerners' idea of Old Tibet as "Shangri-La" (Lang 2007). Lhaba Phuntsog, Director of China's Center for Tibetology, remarked during the opening ceremony of the documentary, "*Tibet in the Past* is a very significant film. It reflects Tibet's progress from darkness to light, from backwardness to forwardness, from closedness to openness, from dictatorship to democracy" (ibid.). When interviewed by *China Daily*, Lhaba Phuntsog said, "It was an extremely dark era, with no equality, human rights or democracy as some people have drummed up. … It is necessary to tell the world what Old Tibet truly was" (Wu 2007). *Tibet in the Past* has been shown in different parts of Tibet Autonomous Region as the Chinese state's continuing project of "comparing Old Tibet with New Tibet" (Huang 2007).

The Chinese state, an agent of the globalization of information technology, also utilizes the internet as a rapidly growing public space to maintain the political narratives of its own version of Old Tibet. China News Net, Justice Net, Xinhua Net (Xinhua News Agency), CRI Net (China Radio International), and En.Tibet.cn (China Tibet Information Center) are among the leading state-operated websites that influence the public's understanding of traditional Tibet in China. The images and descriptions of Old Tibet on these websites are uniformly the same, denouncing traditional Tibet with photographs of its penal system and

narratives of former serfs living in the Lhasa area. For instance, Justice Net, an official website of China's Supreme Court, condemns Old Tibet as a "hell on earth." It features an article on the historical prison in Lhasa prior to the entrance of the Chinese communists. The authors give much emphasis to the "cruelty" of various torturing methods allegedly used by the Old Tibet's legal system. In lengthy descriptions, the authors specifically link this "cruelty" with the Buddhist practices of Lhasa's higher lamas and aristocrats, alleging that human body parts were appropriated from innocent serfs for the purpose of performing "mantra recitation" (Luo and Lou 2007). The authors legitimize this allegation by citing a note sent from Tsechukang, an aristocrat of Lhasa, to Dzege, Lhasa's prison chief:

> Chief Dzege:
>
> We will be performing a Buddhist offering ritual to the devas [heavenly goddesses]. Four skulls, ten sets of intestines, pure blood, defiled blood, dirt, blood from a widow's period, leper's blood, different kinds of flesh, different kinds of heart, ying-yang water, dirt from whirlwind, thistles pointing to the north, dog droppings, human manure, the boots of a butcher, etc. These items must be sent in on the twentieth day.
>
> Signed, Tsechukang
>
> On the nineteenth day
>
> ibid.

The Chinese translation of this short note appears recurrently on other governmental websites as primary evidence of Old Tibet's "brutality" against common Tibetans. Among them, websites maintained by China's Center for Tibetology Research, China Radio International, and Xinhua News Agency's Tibet division extensively post featured articles on Old Tibet. The focal point of the Chinese Web-based representation of traditional Tibet contrasts New Tibet with Old Tibet, emphasizing Old Tibet's "barbarism" and praising New Tibet's benign socialist modernization. The apparent political goal is to illustrate that Tibetans' human rights were severely violated during Old Tibet's existence.

Private websites, often owned by Han Chinese, follow suit by displaying the same images and narratives as state-owned websites. Sohu.com, sina.com, and china.com are the corporate entities which all subscribe to the Chinese state's news syndicates such as Xinhua News Agency. A growing number of small-scale websites operated by Han Chinese individuals are also capitalizing on the striking images of Old Tibet issued by the state. As touring Lhasa is rapidly becoming popular among Han Chinese, inquiries of and discussions on Tibetan history are becoming commonplace in numerous blogs. These private citizens' knowledge of traditional Tibet comes mostly from official sources. For instance, claiming himself as a researcher of mysterious cultures, one blogger reiterates the contents of the 1992 White Paper:

> Occupying less than 5% of the total Tibetan population, bureaucrats, aristocrats, and the upper-level monastics nearly owned all of Tibet's agricultural

> land, grassland, and livestock. When high lamas of different sects practiced tantric Buddhism, they mutilated common people as a form of offerings. As recorded in the 14th century documents, human skulls, leg bones, skins, hearts, and livers were used as offering items.
>
> Wang 2007

In this environment, Li Ao's offensive talk show on Tibet is not an exception but is aligned with China's ideological construct of Old Tibet. This construct has evolved into a modern Han Chinese cultural reflexivity in regards to traditional Tibet's stance in the political domain of China. The label "Old Tibet" is both a sociocultural stigma and a suppressive measure to Tibetans who might otherwise wish to express their traditions. What is traded between Li Ao and Tsewang Norbu and other Tibetans reflects an emerging dialogue and contention initiated by Tibetans living in China, directed toward the majority Han Chinese public regarding the stigmatization of traditional Tibetan culture and religious practices.

Contending voices of Tibetans in the public space

What Li Ao claims as "evidence" of "barbarism" and "ignorance" in traditional Tibetan society comes from a White Paper on Tibet issued by the State Council Information Office of the PRC in 1992, entitled "Tibet: Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation." The purpose of this Government Issue, is stated in its preface:

> She [Tibet] is now experiencing earth-shaking changes in a shift from Medieval extreme backwardness to modernization. … Rumors, distortion, suspicion, misunderstanding all combine to form a layer of mist to envelop this region. In order to know the situation there, it is imperative to look at the facts.
>
> SCIOPRC 2006

Throughout his talk show, Li Ao read many of these alleged facts verbatim. In his "shockjock" style, he essentially reinforces the Chinese state's idea of Old Tibet as a horrific social and religious system.

In the twenty-first century, the Chinese state's representation of Tibet continues to dominate, though differences are beginning to emerge. The position of Tibet and Tibetans in the public space of China has undergone changes since the 1980s, when China began to implement its economic reform. Prior to China's initiative to construct a globally linked market economy, the image of Tibet was exclusively constructed with what the Chinese state referred to as "Old Tibet" and "New Tibet." The former is characterized by "oppression" and "backwardness" under the rule of the Dalai Lama, while the latter eulogizes the benevolence of China's socialist system. The voice of Tibetans was limited to those so-called "former serfs" who denounced Old Tibet and lauded New Tibet.

However, in the twenty-first century, contesting voices of different kinds of Tibetans are no longer absent, especially in cyberspace. The internet has become an integral part of China's public space. It is true that China has deployed

internet-filtering technologies acquired from North American firms such as Cisco Systems and Nortel Networks, causing many scholars to quickly reach a conclusion that the internet is "not a tool of democratization" (Zhou 2008:215). However, from my perspective, this does not mean that the Chinese state has total control of the internet. Since the mid-1990s, contention with the split image of Tibet has emerged recurrently in the Chinese-language online world. With the state's re-adjustment of its Tibet policy and the introduction of the World Wide Web in the 1990s, the notion of public space of China and the representation of Tibet can no longer be understood in their old terms: as solely the Chinese state's monopoly and the schizophrenic stalemate of Old Tibet and New Tibet. It has taken over two decades for the Chinese public to see the emerging voice of Tibetans on the internet. Although this voice is restricted within China's regulatory and political framework, it nevertheless reaches out to both Tibetans and Chinese who have internet access. The relation of this voice with the Chinese state could be characterized as contentious, subversive, dialogical, and subaltern. At this juncture, I wish to make an argument that the public space of China in relation to Tibet has never been "value-neutral," as Robert Barnett discerns in his recent writing contributed to Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer's edited volume entitled *Contemporary Tibet*. Instead, this public space has continuously been filled with China's ideological and political values; however, these dominant values are encountering both direct and indirect opposition in the twenty-first century.

Following Hu Yaobang's visit to Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in the early 1980s, China's public space appeared to be congenial to traditional Tibetan expression. As an effort to build China's global image of tolerance toward Tibetan cultural expressions, the Chinese state's liberal attitude toward the Tibet Question was based upon a set of "deliberate policies" as Barnett points out (Barnett 2006:35). In this recent historical backdrop, public space, from Barnett's perspective:

> is value-neutral – it does not carry any of the dangerously binary associations of notions such as criticism, resistance, or collaboration – and second it describes a sphere of action which by definition is regarded by the state as legitimate, so it has no connotations of subversion or resistance.
>
> ibid.:36

The absence of resistance, in my view, is not enough to qualify the public space as "value-neutral." Instead, it prompts me to take note of the well-known social fact of the previous half-century: the media that facilitates this public space has been in the hands of the Chinese state. In spite of the emerging traditional Tibetan cultural expressions from the 1980s to the 1990s, the image of Tibet was monochromatic, prescribed by the state for the purpose of its positive global public diplomacy on the Tibet Question. In the 1980s, radio and newspapers were the primary mediators of China's public space. Television was just starting to become popular among Han Chinese, while common Tibetans had little access. Tibet, as an idea or a representation constructed in the public realm of China, was filled with the moral and ideological values of socialism, as well as China's imperial legacy of treating Tibet as its territorial imperative. Conspicuous voices and

images of resistance and subversion were absent in the public space of the 1980s, as Tibetans had no access to any public media.

I agree with Barnett's analysis in that, inadvertently, this "value-neutral" environment of the 1980s favored the revitalization of Tibetan culture. At this time, China was eager to construct a positive global self-image in order to attract foreign investment and win favorable bilateral relations with the United States and other powerful Western nations. Within the Party line, Tibetans, as Barnett remarked, especially officials, "were thus able to embark upon and facilitate new initiatives that involved specifically Tibetan cultural expression" (ibid.:38). The positive public image of Tibet was, in this respect, intrinsically connected with the Chinese state's attempt to show some traditional aspects of Tibetan culture in the midst of its nationwide economic development. On one hand, China's policy adjustment may be credited for tolerating traditional Tibetan cultural expressions. On the other hand, China's market economy has revealed its own force to promote Tibet to both domestic and international tourist markets. Thus, in all Tibetan regions of China, local Tibetan officials and merchants operated within an economic development trend that Barnett calls "Tibetanizing practices", accentuating local Tibetan characteristics. The 1980s proved to be the starting point of the Tibetan cultural revitalization, as seen in the realms of literary publications, tour brochures, and websites. This time period was also responsible for the heightened popular expressions of Tibetan cultural identity in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Since the mid-1990s, the public space of China has not been able to maintain itself as a "value-neutral" sphere, especially in the midst of the rapid proliferation of internet access in the country. Voices of dissidence and discourses on various social issues began to surface. Tibetans, particularly those who live and work in urban centers of China, have utilized this publicly available space, i.e. the internet, conferences, and publications, to express their critical positions regarding the current state of Tibetans living in China.

Emotions in leading Tibetan voices in the twenty-first century

Yidam Tsering, poet

In the early winter of 2002, I attended a Chinese national conference on Tibetan studies in Chengdu, Sichuan. In addition to the scheduled presentations of research papers, this four-day conference also became a site for the emotional expressions of Tibetan nationalism among contemporary Tibetan intellectuals. It all began on the first afternoon when the late Yidam Tsering, a prominent Tibetan poet, spoke. He had his script ready in hand, but did not bother to read it. He began his talk with a question directed to the conference moderator:

> This is a Tibetan studies conference. Why aren't we speaking Tibetan? … What is the unity of all nationalities? The unity must be based on equality. Lately, people only emphasize unity without even considering the

> importance of equality. Since 1965, what we [cadres] have opposed is not Han-chauvinism but so called "local nationalism" and "national tantrum." These phrases are a curse placed upon minority cadres and intellectuals. They have been a weapon that silenced what we wanted to say. There are so many fake Marxists in China and they're so good at beating up those who speak truths and facts. Perhaps, my big mouth doesn't know how to praise, but at least it speaks true words. I'm seventy-one. I have to speak true words. If I don't, my mother will regret giving birth to me … I was born from the womb of a Tibetan mother, and want to continue to be reborn as a Tibetan … I warn you – Nobody should look down upon Tibetan culture. If you do, you're not your mother's son …

Yidam Tsering wiped away tears as he finished his speech. On the subsequent nights, many young Tibetan scholars gathered around this charismatic poet, offering toasts and voicing their nationalist feelings in his room and publicly in restaurants.

Tsering Dongrub, a contemporary historian of Tibet

A Tibetan historian and archivist based in Kangding, the capital of Sichuan Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsering Dongrub is a scholar who is outspoken about Tibetan history. On the opening page of his *A General History of Tibetan People*, banned by the Chinese state in 2001, he states:

> I am a son of Tibetan people. I deeply love my nationality which bred me. I do not have other means to repay her but use my pure painstaking labor to write our ancestors' splendid history. … This, perhaps, counts as my token of repayment to her kindness in raising me! … My subjective wish is to encourage pride in our history so as to strengthen the desire for the betterment of our nationality.
>
> Tsering Dongrub 2001:1

A General History was one of the first comprehensive works on Tibetan history written in Chinese by a Tibetan historian. In his book, the history of Tibet is based upon both historical events and mythical narratives, ranging from Tibetan national heroes and the magnificent Buddhist culture to the Tibetan creation story. This painstakingly written comprehensive history of Tibet is intended to encompass all Tibetan regions.

As Tsering Dongrub was also present at the Tibetan conference in Chengdu, he and I engaged in several lengthy conversations about his book. Without much funding, he voluntarily took an administrative leave for five years in order to complete his book. According to Tsering, in choosing the book's title, he specifically chose *A General History of Tibetan People* rather than "A General History of Tibet." The difference lies in the fact that "Tibet" in China usually refers to Tibetan Autonomous Region, only one part of cultural Tibet. His use of "Tibetan People" was meant to encompass Khambas and Amdowas as well as central

Tibetans in TAR. Since the 1950s, both Kham and Amdo regions were allotted to Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai, and Gansu Provinces. On the political level, Tsering Dongrub's pan-Tibetan inclusion has broken the systemic exclusion of Kham and Amdo from central Tibet. In the traditional historiographical practice of PRC scholars, Tibetan history generally means the history of TAR. Topic-wise, Tsering Dongrub was ambitious enough to cover almost all aspects of Tibetan culture and people. He intended his book to be an encyclopedic source to emphasize the magnitude of Tibetan civilization in all regions of Tibet. In the meantime, Tsering Dongrub lays out the historical fact that Tibet was once a self-governing nation. His book also contends with the Chinese state's promotion of "national heroes" of Han origin, who, in fact, committed atrocities to ethnic minorities. He writes in his introduction:

> In the history of Tibet, there were numerous national heroes who courageously resisted foreign invasions and firmly stood their ground against national oppression. Chinese feudal rulers persecuted them as "traitors" and "bandits." However, their deeds won Tibetan people's respect and love. … Among the historical figures in the history of Han nationality, there were also heroes, such as Quyuan, Yue Fei, and Wen Tianxiang, who courageously fought against other nationalities. Han people widely eulogize them as national heroes. … However, from the perspectives of other nationalities, these historical figures committed the crime of suppressing and massacring minority nationalities. If they were deemed criminals undermining China's unity, Han people's national feelings would be hurt.
>
> ibid.:5

Oser, writer and poet

Oser, a young contemporary Tibetan writer based in Lhasa and Beijing, is currently a magnet for many young Tibetan scholars and college students in China. She begins her recently banned book *Notes on Tibet* with this epigraph:

> Ah, Tibet, homeland of my many lifetimes. If I were a butter lamp, how I would forever burn beside you; if you were a soaring vulture, take me to the luminous Pureland!
>
> Oser 2003:5

This personifying enunciation about Tibet is a frequent theme in many of Oser's writings. She not only shares her private feelings about being a Tibetan with the public (http://map.woeser.com/), but also includes other Tibetans' experiences under the rule of the Chinese state. In *Notes on Tibet*, she recounts the experience of a Tibetan monk named Nima Tsering who, in 1999, was appointed by the Chinese government as a Tibetan monastic representative to attend an international human rights conference in Oslo, Norway. His presence was intended to be a testimony to the religious freedom of Tibetans under the rule of China. Oser narrates:

> It was the last day of the conference. The Chinese delegation was invited to visit a famous Norwegian national park. As this young lama was happily strolling in this beautiful park, a young Tibetan woman was walking straight to him, extending her arms as if she was meeting a long lost friend. Nima Tsering was puzzled, but felt he had known her before. He could not help but also extended his hands to the woman. However, he did not expect this – the woman tightly grasped his hands and broke into tears. She sobbed aloud and said to him, "Gushu [honorific title for monks], what are you doing here? What are you doing here with these Chinese? You're a Tibetan. You must remember you're a Tibetan. Don't stand with them … " The woman continued her sobbing, "Please don't return with them…" Nima Tsering said to her, "How can I not return? That's my homeland. If we all leave, to whom are we going to leave it?" … When the airplane was taking off from Oslo airport, leaving Norway, two trails of tears quietly streamed down Nima Tsering's thin cheeks.
>
> ibid.:228

Most of Oser's prolific works are indicative of the national feelings of contemporary Tibetan intellectuals. Oser is among the emerging young Tibetan writers and scholars who take full advantage of the global proliferation of digital technologies, such as the internet, to make her thoughts and feelings available for urban Tibetans and the general public of the PRC. Since having several books published in Taiwan, such as *A Memory of Tibet – Twenty-three Elders' Narratives of the Cultural Revolution in Tibet* (2006b) and *Forbidden Memory: Tibet during the Cultural Revolution* (2006a), she has become an admired writer among urban Tibetans.

The state's stigmatization of Tibetans

The emotional expressions of urban Tibetans' ethnic nationalism are not an accident but a result of socialist China's effort to redefine the traditional cultural values and social system of Tibet. In the socialist transfiguration of traditional Tibet (Old Tibet), the state ideology, special vocabularies, and numerous sets of social labels have been mobilized and fashioned. The cultural consequences of these state acts have negatively affected Tibetans.

Ethnic "tantrums" and "local nationalism"

The collective feelings expressed in the public speeches and writings of Yidam Tsering, Tsering Dongrub, and Oser are not a recent cultural phenomenon. The Chinese state has deemed them an expression of *difang-minzu-zhuyi* (地方民族主义) or "local nationalism." Originally, local nationalism was voiced by Chinese-trained minority-nationality cadres and scholars who felt that "minority nationalities can achieve socialism without Han people's help" (UFWD 1957). The Chinese Communist Party, however, officially coined this term in 1957 in a document entitled *Directives on the Political Rectification and the Socialist Education*

in Minority Nationality Regions (ibid.). The Party politically framed minority nationalities' resistance to the implementation of a Chinese socialist system as local nationalism. Since 1957 the phrase "local nationalism" has evolved into a political and legal label used to suppress the national feelings of ethnic minorities.

Ironically, prior to the official circulation of the phrase, Mao Zedong himself had admitted the cultural arrogance of many Han Chinese cadres working in ethnic minority regions. Mao termed this cultural arrogance as *dahanzu-zhuyi* (大汉族主义) or "Han chauvinism." In 1953, he issued an internal directive called "Criticizing Han Chauvinism," in which he states, "In some places, nationality relations are very abnormal. Under this circumstance, to a Communist, it is not tolerable. We must deeply criticize the serious Han chauvinism among our Party members and cadres" (Mao 1977:75–6). It is clear that Mao and his Communist Party were aware of ethnic minorities' resistance to the new socialist China.

By 1957, as the criticism of Han chauvinism fizzled out, the Party launched a campaign to root out local nationalisms, which were in essence minority nationalities' opposition to Han chauvinism. In this ongoing campaign, the Chinese state has lumped together the emotional expressions of ethnic minorities as "national tantrum." "National tantrum" is a rough translation from the Chinese phrase *minzu qingxu* (民族情绪). The most nuanced part of this phrase is *qingxu* (情绪), which refers to emotionally expressed discontents and complaints, especially when situated in the political culture of the Chinese Communist Party. In the Party's history of "thought reform," the phrase *nao qingxu* (闹情绪), "to disturb with emotional disgruntlement," was frequently used to quell or dismiss political discontent.

In the context of Tibetan intellectuals and cadres in the PRC, their emotions, or *qingxu*, are deemed potential sources of separatism. Dawa Hsirao, a Tibetan scholar based in Beijing, pointed out that since the founding of the People's Republic of China, no single "Han chauvinist" has been publicly denounced or prosecuted, while more than 100,000 intellectuals and cadres of minority nationalities have been persecuted as "local nationalists" (Dawa Hsirao 2001:16). This same historical practice often repeats itself in the twenty-first century.

Tsering Dongrub's *General History* was abruptly banned in China's book market less than six months after its publication. In a small gathering of Tibetan scholars during the 2002 Tibetan studies conference in Chengdu, Tsering Dongrub narrated the rationale for the Chinese state's censorship of his book:

> Early this year, my book was officially banned. The publisher forwarded a letter to me from "above" [unspecified authority] without the name of the critic and his work unit. This anonymous letter lists six reasons why my book was banned: (1) It was written with the author's presumptuous inclination and partiality; (2) It overemphasized warfare between Tibetans and the Tang Dynasty; (3) It has too little depiction of the influence of Han culture on Tibetan culture; (4) It mistakes Princess Wenchen as the sixth wife rather than the first wife of King Songtsen Gampo; (5) It intentionally raises the social position of religion higher than it should be. The fact is that "religion is the opium of the people," and (6) it negates the historical fact that Tibetan monks were subordinate to the rulership of the Song Dynasty, and it limits Tibetans'

> relation to the Song Dynasty to mere economic exchange. Towards the end of the letter, this anonymous critic says, "This book has grave political problems. The author has poor scholarship. Because of his arrogance and conceit, the author lists many 'firsts' of Tibet." Basically, I feel, because my book was accused as a tool of "local nationalism," it was dismissed.

Oser's *Notes on Tibet* was banned in early 2004. Here is the verdict of the Chinese authorities:

> [The book] exaggerates and beautifies the function of religion in social life. Several chapters reveal the author's veneration and belief in the Dalai Lama. Some contents even express narrow nationalist thoughts and viewpoints that do not benefit the unity of China and the solidarity of all nationalities. Some parts of the book turn a blind eye to the achievements of reforms in Tibet in last few decades, and indulge old Tibet based on unfounded hearsay. This book makes incorrect value judgments and betrays correct political principles. The author misplaces a contemporary writer's social and political responsibilities for building an advanced culture ["advanced culture" here refers to Chinese socialism].
>
> Wang 2004

This type of censorship is the Chinese state's ongoing reduction of Tibetan national feelings and emotions to a "local nationalism" and "national tantrum." As a modern nation-state, China has shown painstaking efforts to restrain collective emotions that subvert its intended national unity of all ethnic minorities. To understand this ongoing censorship of Tibetan ethnic emotions, I think that it is crucial to make a connection with the Chinese state's nationality identification project during the 1950s and 1960s – a project to classify the frontier peoples of China who are not of Han nationality, but have been deemed critical for China's territorial imperative. The principle of this nationality identification project was based on Stalin's demarcation of a nationality with four identifiers, namely, common territory, language, economy, and psychological nature. Stevan Harrell refers to this historical project as China's socialist "civilizing project" (Harrell 1995:6). Half a century later, this socialist project has proven itself to be an ethnocentric project under the guise of the principles of socialist universals and Marxist-Maoist social evolutionism. What this socialist civilizing project has brought to common Tibetans is what Harrell calls a "stigmatized identity" that gives many contemporary Tibetans "a sense of themselves as backward, uncivilized, dirty, stupid…" (ibid.:6). This stigmatized identity emerges from the Chinese state's invention of a new socialist Tibet that continually denounces and demonizes the traditional Tibet, as well as from racializing Tibetans as a "backward people."

Nationality identification as a project of inventing a modern Tibet

In Benedict Anderson's demarcation of "nation" he points out, "No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation…" (Anderson

1996:16). However, if I consider his use of the word "coterminous" from an ideological perspective, Chinese nationalism seems to contradict Anderson's claim by imagining itself coterminous with humankind based on the Marxist-Maoist ambition to "liberate all mankind" (*jiefang quanrenlei* 解放全人类). It is clear that Chinese nationalism was embedded with a conscious communist agency whose teleology was to ultimately transform the plurality of human societies into one single communist utopia. Historically, Chinese communist nationalism began as a missionizing project for the messianic coming of this distant utopia in which all human differences would disappear. This utopia was imagined along with the Marxist claim of a universal human development, that is, communism as the inevitable destiny of all human societies (Smith 1986:330).

In this respect, the Chinese communists invented a new socialist tradition for Tibetans. The features of this new tradition are identical to Eric Hobsbawm's idea of invented traditions that were "constructed and formally instituted … within a brief and datable period" (Hobsbawm 1983:1). According to Hobsbawm, an invented tradition refers to "a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (ibid.:1). It should be noted here that "continuity" in this sense does not refer to the continuity of an unbroken indigenous past, but connects itself with certain modern turning points, such as revolutions. In other words, turning points refer to those intentional historical events that unquestionably attempted to break away from a particular past in order to establish a new tradition. In the communist revolutions in Eastern Europe and China, this particular past was pinpointed as the age-old traditional cultures. The invented new socialist tradition was meant to replace these old traditions and to command the populace to break away from them. Thus, in this sense, the old tradition was meant to be weakened or destroyed by the new one.

In addition to their invention of a communist tradition for Tibetans, the Chinese communists also developed their revolutionary continuity by demolishing the indigenous governing body and cultural ballast of Tibet. This is also known as Tibet's *chösinyitrel* (ཆོས་སྲིད་ཟུང་འབྲེལ།) or "polity in which religion and political affairs are joined together" (Goldstein 1991:2) with its accompanying Buddhist monasteries throughout Tibetan regions. The newly founded People's Republic of China, in fact, endowed the Chinese communists with the position of messianic nationalists delivering the "gospel" of Marxist modernity in the name of liberty, democracy, and justice. This forceful current of communist moral "surplus" was a force of what Terry Pickett calls modern "progressive destabilization throughout the globe" (Pickett 1996:21). The target of this destabilizing force was anything traditional prior to the revolutionary events of the communists. The moral superiority of the Chinese Communist has been imparted to minority nationalities that were allegedly mal-nurtured in their own traditions, but had potential to be "rescued" and transformed into new socialist citizens.

As an agent of Marxist modernity, the Chinese state assigned itself the communist universalizing mission to transform all peoples within its political boundaries into socialists. It possessed an "agentive mode" (Comaroff and Comaroff

1991:10) with the power of both Marxist ideology and the new socialist empire. This agentive mode of power resembles that of the nineteenth-century Christian missionaries in Africa in its bearing of a "totalizing moral economy" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxv) that invalidates the indigenous and forcefully inserts the exogenous so as to establish a new order based on an envisioned future without any indigenous historical roots. In this agentive mode, Marxist modernity, in essence, was a project of the "conquest of the mind" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:4) in which historical and cultural realities are re-interpreted only on the economic scale of the polarized classes of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; thus, complex indigenous social relations were reduced to a mere "class struggle." Regardless of the historical absence of these extremely polarizing classes, a new socialist Tibet was expected to rise from the Tibetan masses' denouncement of their traditional establishments. Tsering Shakya points out that the arrival of Chinese Marxist modernity in both ideological and military terms meant the demise of the traditional Tibet, which is represented merely as a serfdom filled with moral darkness, barbarism, and oppression based on Marxist economic determinism (Tsering Shakya 1999:xxii).

In his reading of socialism-based nationalism, Pickett notices that there is an embedded force, which specifically aims to annihilate traditions prior to the inception of modernity. He points out, "The authoritative use of all force in the modern age has as its purpose the abolition of an ancient definition of human nature" (Pickett 1996:5). In this destructive process, Marxist economic determinism in the manner of "class struggle" was the primary ideological tool used to dismantle Tibetan traditional cultural institutions. This massive class struggle uncompromisingly targeted the "pariah class" (ibid.:19) of Tibet. The Chinese communists pressed thousands of common Tibetans into the "class struggle" which was clearly aimed to "amputate the traditional defining relations from the individual in order to render him or her an unencumbered and compliant subject of the modern state" (Tsering Shakya 1999:6).

According to Dawa Norbu's study, the Chinese implementation of class struggle in Tibetan regions encountered stiff popular resistance. This resistance was spontaneous rather than organized and mostly involved common Tibetans. Marxist ideology was culturally alien and religiously offensive to the Buddhist value system of Tibetans. In essence, the class struggle ideology was a threat to Tibetans' Buddhist faith. In his comment on Tibetan uprisings in Kham in the 1950s, Dawa Norbu points out:

> The Chinese liberators were called *brtan dgra* (བསྟན་དགྲ) – enemies of the faith; the Khampa guerrillas who led the Tibetan nationalist movement were popularly called *brtan sruñg* (བསྟན་སྲུང་།) – defenders of the faith; and the main aim of the movement was the defense of Tibetan Buddhism as personified by the Dalai Lama.
>
> Dawa Norbu 2001:226

Similar uprisings also occurred in the 1960s after the Dalai Lama left Lhasa for India. Oser has recently collected narratives from Tibetans who were involved

in the uprisings. These narratives are particularly revealing about the common Tibetan rejection of the Chinese socialist system. For instance, in 1962, Ani Trinley Chodron (འཕྲིན་ལས་ཆོས་སྒྲོན།), a nun in her early thirties, led over a hundred common Tibetans to resist the Chinese socialist reforms in Nyemo County of Tibet Autonomous Region. Armed with Chodron's ritual empowerment and primitive weapons such as swords and daggers, they aimed to drive the "red Han Chinese" from the region, but were outgunned by the Chinese army. What needs to be highlighted is that all of her followers were what the Chinese called "liberated serfs," and in fact, possessed a deep Buddhist faith. Based on her research, Oser states:

> This series of events were called "counter-revolutionary incidents". … At the time, Tibet Autonomous Region had a total of seventy counties. Fifty-two of them were involved in these "counter-revolutionary incidents." Over seventy-four percent of people were persecuted as "traitors." Although the suppressive military campaign ended in 1969, it nevertheless reached a most horrific degree.
>
> Oser 2005a

Presently, when Tibetan intellectuals and cadres, trained in this Chinese socialist fashion, look back at the historical path they have traversed alongside the Chinese communists since the 1950s, they see the Chinese communists' destruction of Tibetan culture, demolition of Buddhist monasteries, and political division of one group of Tibetans from another. For example, at the 2002 Tibetan studies conference in Chengdu, Yangling Dorje, a retired governor of Tibet Autonomous Region, released a figure asserting that during the Cultural Revolution over 160,000 common Tibetans were criminalized as "new traitors" (*xingpan* 新叛) to socialism in the Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. This prefecture has a populace of fewer than 350,000 Tibetans, indicating that almost half of the Tibetan population there became the victims of this massive "class struggle."

From a common Tibetan's perspective, the Chinese communist invasion of Tibet between the late 1950s and the mid-1970s was a Tibetan national trauma. For this reason, contemporary Tibetan intellectuals in China are making an effort to exert a public testimony of their national trauma. Phuntso Wangye, one of the first generation Tibetan communists, worked closely with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai on the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet. Afterward, he was imprisoned for eighteen years in Beijing's Qincheng Prison for political prisoners. In his Chinese biography, he comments on Han Chinese cadres who persecuted him in the past, "Under the empty words of abstractly acknowledged equality of all nationalities, deep in their souls hides their 'noble thoughts' of the subordination of minority nationalities to Han nationality" (Dawa Hsirao 2001:33–4).

The racialization of Tibetans as a consequence of Marxist-Maoist modernity

In his study of modern Chinese nationalism, Prasenjit Duara points out that nationalism, as the project for the genesis of the national self, is a site of contestations and negotiations because "nationalism is often considered to override other identities

within the bounds of the imagined nation – such as religious, racial, linguistic, class, gender, or even historical ones – to encompass these differences in a larger identity" (Duara 1995:10). In other words, this larger national identity contains various "smaller others" (ibid.:15) in empire-like nation-states such as the PRC. Since the 1950s, Tibetans have become one of the "smaller others" of socialist China.

In forging a new socialist identity for the "smaller others," the Chinese state addresses non-Han populations as *shaoshu minzu* (少数民族) or minority nationalities. Both the Chinese state's and the Han people's popular usage of "nationality" almost exclusively refers to non-Han peoples in phrases such as "nationality regions" (*minzu diqu* 民族地区) and "nationality cadres" (*minzu ganbu* 民族干部). These terms convey a sense of otherness. The political and popular use of "nationality" resembles that of "ethnic" in the West, which conveys a sense of peculiarity and of being an outsider. The popular use of "nationality" in China is what Frederik Barth calls "ascription by others" (Barth 1996:76). In essence, it is an issue of domination. This otherly-ascribed marker shows that the dominant group does not address itself in ethnic terms, whereas a dominated, minority group is represented as an ethnic group in the public space of the dominant group (Schermerhorn 1996:17). In the context of China, "nationality," as an ascription by others, is also an inherent consequence of China's nationwide proliferation of Marxist-Maoist evolutionism (Gladney 2004). Marxist-Maoist evolutionism measures the social and cultural progress of each minority nationality on a unilinear evolutionary scale from the "backward" to the "advanced."

When this logic is in practice, it manifests itself in what Johannes Fabian calls the "denial of coevalness" (Fabian 1983:31) of others. This refers to the intentional temporal displacement of others, in which the coevalness, or the sense of contemporaneity, among different peoples of the earth is broken up into separate temporal units of backwardness and forwardness. In the case of China's nationality identification project, time itself serves as a racializing device severing the shared time of Han Chinese and Tibetans. In the process of Chinese Marxist conquest of the "smaller others," time can be understood as "Typological Time" (ibid.:23). As Fabian says:

> It [typological time] indulges in grand-scale periodizing. It likes to devise ages and stages. … Typological Time underlies such qualifications as preliterate vs. literate, traditional vs. modern, peasant vs. industrial, and a host of permutations which include pairs such as tribal vs. feudal, rural vs. urban.
>
> ibid.:23

In other words, the quantitative appearance of chronologies is metamorphosed into the qualitative measurements of human histories. Calendrical dates are imbued with sociopolitical meanings and function as taxonomic references that map out the grand scheme of the classification of cultures with temporal dimensions, such as "tradition" and "modernity," and "the barbarous" and "the civilized." These phrases immediately distance contemporaneous human groups. In the context of China, the Marxist-Maoist evolutionary paradigm reinforced Han Chinese traditional prejudices toward non-Han populations as savages and barbarians.

Under Chinese Marxist modernity, Tibetans are temporalized, spatialized, and racialized as "others". The Chinese state's nationality identification, in essence, is a political representation of its "smaller others." This type of representation involves volition and a worldview defined by the dominant. In the postscript of *Notes on Tibet*, Oser writes, "Out of ideological needs, Tibet, at the outset, faces deformation. … This image-management process operates with a standardized and legalized system of representation with specialized vocabularies" (Oser 2003:437). For the last half-century, the image of Tibetans as "liberated serfs" has saturated the populace of China. The adjective "liberated" signifies the modern socialist tradition in Tibet, while the noun "serf" continues to suggest the "dark," "oppressive," and "barbarous" past of Tibetan civilization. These popular stereotypes took effect especially after the Chinese state released a film entitled *Serf*, in 1964. This film portrayed a common Tibetan named Qiangba who suffered from abject oppression due to Tibetan monastic and aristocratic establishments, and was thankful for "liberation" by the Chinese army. Another classic piece of socialist propaganda was called "The Wrath of Serfs," which consisted of a series of sculptures in the Soviet style that provided a visual narrative about the oppressive nature of traditional Tibet. It was first initiated by the Tibetan Revolutionary Committee in 1972. The photographs of the sculptures were compiled into a pictorial, issued in 2005 for the celebration of China's fortieth anniversary of the Tibet Autonomous Region. These standardized images continue to typecast Tibetans into a social evolutionary specimen of a "barbarous" past.

On the Marxist adaptation of Lewis Henry Morgan's (1818–1881) unilinear scale of human evolution from primitive and barbarous stages to the civilized stage, Tibetan culture was identified as the worst case of barbarism. This modern ideology of social evolutionism disguised the existing Han Chinese ethnocentrism. Traditionally, non-Han populations, especially those residing in southern and western China, were ascribed the quality of *man* (蛮), or barbarism. For instance, the Yi, Dai, and other southern ethnic groups were looked down upon as *nan-man* (南蛮), or "southern barbarians". Prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Han Chinese classified Tibetans into two types: *sheng-bo* (生番) and *shu-bo* (熟番) (Mei 1936:310). The former refers those Tibetans who had no cultural interactions with Han Chinese. The word *sheng* means "strange" and "raw." The latter refers to Tibetans who were Han-ized, as the word *shu* suggests "familiar" and "cooked." Since the mid-twentieth century under Chinese socialist rule, Tibetans have no longer been categorized using the term "raw" or "cooked;" however, the ethnocentric legacy of Chinese imperial eras continues to be present in the PRC's evolutionist approach to identifying ethnic groups within its political boundary. In comparison with its imperial counterparts in the past, the Chinese socialist civilizing project is also culturally self-centered. Harrell points out that the tenets of socialist policy on the minority issue are meant to:

> make the peripheral peoples more like those of the center, but rather to bring them to a universal standard of progress or modernity that exists independent of where the center might be on the historical scale at any given moment.
>
> (Harrell 1995:23)

Buddhism as a primordial recourse of contemporary Tibetan cultural identity

While virtual Tibet is becoming both a commercial site for profit ventures and an alternative social space for Chinese Buddhists, an opportunity has arisen for urban Tibetans to publicize their own representation of Tibet as a public expression of Tibetan cultural identity. Peter Berger points out, "Impinging global influences can also lead to a revitalization of indigenous cultural forms" (Berger 2002:10). This is precisely what is taking place in the People's Republic of China. Prior to the inception of Tibet Culture Net, China has reserved a considerable public space for Tibet; however, this "Tibet," as Oser and other Tibetan critics have pointed out, is a space with a national drama of the Chinese state in which Tibet has been "re-written, re-drawn, re-sung, re-choreographed, re-photographed, and re-sculpted" (Oser 2006c). However, this drama is now encountering urban Tibetans' own narratives about Tibet in historical, religious, and emotional terms. Tibetan Buddhism is the center of the public discourse of urban Tibetans when Tibetan identity is discussed.

In defense of Tibetan Buddhism in his letter to Li Ao, publicized in Tibet Culture Net, Tsewang Norbu writes:

> Tibetan Buddhism, as Tibetan nationality's unique civilization and value system, is the core of Tibetan culture. In China, Tibetan Buddhism is a legal religion protected by the constitution and law. … As a matter of fact, Tibetan Buddhism has not only nurtured Tibetan nationality, but also benefited other peoples. Based upon compassion, love, and peace as its principle, Tibetan Buddhism and culture have already drawn worldwide attention for research. Followers of Tibetan Buddhism in different parts of the world are increasing daily. "Tibetan Buddhism has entered American mainstream consciousness" [Du Yongbing]. Last year during the World Buddhist Forum Conference in China, it was reported that Ye Xiaowen … frequently expounded the meaning of Buddhist "co-dependent arising" as mutual dependence and co-existence. Expressed in one word, it is "peace."
>
> Tsewang Norbu 2007

Tsewang Norbu's and his compatriots' current response to Li Ao's demonizing rhetoric toward Old Tibet may be counted as the second climax of Tibetan bloggers' protests against the pejorative image of traditional Tibet fostered by Han Chinese. Style-wise, in comparison with Oser and Yidam Tsering, Tsewang Norbu does not directly attack the Chinese state; however, each writer represents Tibetan culture with a Buddhist overtone in which Tibetan civilization and Tibetan Buddhism are synonymous.

In the contemporary world, Anthony Smith points out, "The ethnic renaissance has the power to heal the rift in the alienated consciousness of marginalized men and women, and to draw from them its special ideological character" (Smith 1981:xiii). In facing the cultural imperialism of a socialist empire, the ideological character of current Tibetan intellectuals' ethnic revival is their primordial turn to

the sacred character of Tibet in terms of Tibet's distinct Buddhist civilization. The frequent images in Oser's works are the Dalai Lama and her nostalgic evocation of the pure snow mountains of Tibet. On July 5, 2005, Oser posted a poem on her blog hosted on the Tibet Culture Net, dedicated to the 14th Dalai Lama:

> On a pilgrimage –
> My eyes well up with warm tears;
> My bosom holds the most beautiful flowers in this world.
> Before they wither,
> I am racing to find him – an old man in a maroon robe,
> Presenting the flowers to him –
> A magnificent jewel and an enlightening smile.
> I will forever fasten my coming life-times to him
>
> Oser 2005b

In December, 2005, Oser posted another poem on her blog:

> These mountains with melting snow are not my snow mountains.
> Mine are the snow mountains of the past.
> They are far away on the horizon of the heavens – how pure!
> They are blossoming lotus flowers.
> These withering lotus flowers are not my lotus flowers.
> Mine are the lotus flowers of the past.
> They surround the snow mountains – how splendid!
> They are rainbow-colored prayer flags flapping in the wind.
>
> Oser 2005c

Yidam Tsering's works also illustrate a similar primordial articulation of a Buddhist Tibet. He frequently expressed his pride that his birthplace was the same as that of the 14th Dalai Lama. The snow lion is a frequent image in his literary activities. In *The Snow Lion's Roar*, one of the collections of his poems, he writes:

> Tibetans regards snow lions as sacred, especially in our nomenclatures of all sorts. The Buddha is also called "The Lion's Roar Buddha;" Bodhisattva Manjusri has a title called "The Lion Rider;" Bodhisattva Yangjanma (དབྱངས་ཅན་མ།) is known as a "Lion Teaser;" and one of Padmasambhava's names is "Lion's Roar." Sometimes, when an infant just comes into the world, parents would name it Zungbumgyal (གཟུངས་འབུམ་རྒྱལ། *gzungs vbum rgyal*), which means "the might of ten thousand lions" and "peace with dignity." Obviously, the snow lion has become the mighty protecting deity of the Land of Snows …
>
> As a son of the snow mountains, it is my irresistible responsibility to inherit and promote the culture of the Land of Snows. Whenever I think of the snow lion, I'm elated.
>
> Yidam Tsering 1999:34–5

At one point during the Tibetan studies conference in 2002, Yidam Tsering told a crowd of young Tibetan scholars about how he had responded to a Han Chinese scholar's doubt regarding the existence of the mythical snow lion in Tibet. Yidam Tsering's reply was, "Have you, the children of dragons, seen your sacred dragon that looks like a reptile and a beast with chicken claws and deer horns?"

In his primordial turn, Tsering Dongrub speaks of Buddhism with familiarity and even kindredness. In one of our conversations, he explained why Tibetan Buddhist culture is the dominant theme in his *A General History of Tibetan People*:

> You see, since Buddhism was fully established in Tibet, it has become the centripetal force of Tibetan culture, and its monasteries are the center of cultural education for common Tibetans. Monks were intellectuals. Also, in traditional Tibet, there were many Tibetans who called themselves *chosde* (ཆོས་སྡེ།) that means "subjects of Dharma." Their tribal chiefs had temporal authority over them, but had no say on their religious affairs. Buddhist culture is everywhere, even in our native religion, *Bon*. Even the highest peak of the Himalayas is called *Jomo* (ཇོ་མོ།) that is another way to say nun in Tibetan …
>
> Interview notes

In this context, the ethnic primordiality that Tibetan intellectuals are invoking resembles what Anthony Smith calls a "myth–symbol complex," in which the past of Tibet is narrated in both mythical and symbolic terms regarding the origins of the Tibetan nation and its people. "Myth" here is a generative process of collective story-telling. Its aim is to search for the historical origins of an ethnic group for the purpose of instituting its legitimate ethnic sovereignty in the eyes of neighboring groups. The myth–symbol complex of the contemporary Tibetan ethnic revival possesses much religiosity centered upon Tibetan Buddhism, in which the Dalai Lama and the sacred sites of Tibet appear as Tibetan national hierophanies or manifestations of the sacred (Eliade 1959:11). The Dalai Lama and the sacred landscape of Tibet are the bedrock of many Tibetan intellectuals' collective sentiment.

Take the symbol of the Dalai Lama as an example. "Dalai Lama" is not the name of a person, but of a religious and cultural institution of Tibet. This institution, as has been covered in previous chapters, is an integral part of a Tibetan Buddhist cultural system called *tulkus*. The current Dalai Lama is the most widely-known incarnate lama among Tibetans. In the early 1980s, when China began its nationwide economic reform, it allowed the Dalai Lama's fact-finding delegations to visit Tibetan regions. The Chinese statesmen were expecting common Tibetans' outright denouncement to the delegations as the representatives of the old, oppressive Tibetan ruling class. Arjia Rinpoche, the abbot of Kundum Monastery who is currently in exile in the US, was one of the Chinese state's representatives escorting the members of the four delegations sent by the Dalai Lama. In my interview with him, he recalled:

> Because they [the Chinese statesmen] were afraid that the "liberated serfs" in Lhasa would get revenge on the "feudal lords," they made sure to have the

> delegates protected. However, when one of the delegations led by the Dalai Lama's sister arrived in Lhasa, what happened there surprised the Chinese government. Thousands of "liberated serfs" surrounded the delegates like an unstoppable tide. They did not take revenge on them, but were tearfully asking for blessings from the delegates.

As discussed in Chapter 2, from a Durkheimian perspective, an incarnate lama is a social fact of Tibetan Buddhist culture, meaning that an incarnate lama is a spiritual substance of his community. This is because an incarnate lama constitutes "the beliefs, tendencies and practices of the group taken collectively" and expresses "a certain state of the collective mind" (Durkheim 1982:54–5). In the case of Tibetan intellectuals, the search for the lost nation of Tibet is synonymous with a collective quest for the sacredness the lost nation once possessed. This sacredness is not historically unfounded imagination but has been well practised in traditional Tibet. The public surge of Tibetan emotional expression of national feelings resembles religious nationalism in the twenty-first century, because nation and religion bear mutual representation of one another, and are both signifiers of the same sacred cultural identity. In his study of religious nationalism, Peter van der Veer points out:

> They [sacred sites] are the places on the surface of the earth that express most clearly a relation between cosmology and private experience. A journey to one of these centers is a discovery of one's identity in relation to the other world and to the community of believers – ritual construction of self that not only integrates the believers but also places a symbolic boundary between them and "outsiders".
>
> van der Veer 1994:11

The emotionality of an injured collective identity

Contemporary Tibetan intellectuals' collective emotions are double-edged. On one side, their positive emotions rest upon the sacred realm of Tibetan Buddhist culture. These emotions generate a collective sense of pride in their national identity. On the other side, negative emotions reside, as a result of Tibetans' social marginality and stigmatization as a "backward" people in modern China. These negative emotions are intrinsically connected with suppression, repression, and depression; however, their public expressions are an instrument of self-representation. In this sense, Tibetan intellectuals' emotions can also be looked upon as what Randall Collins refers to as "emotional energy," which is "a continuum, ranging from a high end of confidence, enthusiasm, good self-feelings … to a low end of depression, lack of initiative, and negative self-feelings" (Collins 1990:32). However, all varied shades of this collective emotional energy produce the group solidarity of Tibetan intellectuals. In many ways, this collective emotional energy has engendered a community of feelings among numerous contemporary Tibetan intellectuals. They utilize professional

conferences as a platform for expressing their cultural solidarity and challenging the Chinese state's nationality policies. Tibetan scholars use the internet to establish websites and discussion forums in order to promote positive images of Tibet, just as Oser has been doing since 2005.

Anthony Smith characterizes the crucial role of indigenous intellectuals in modern ethnic revivals as "the new priesthood of the nation" (Smith 1986:157). In the case of Tibetan intellectuals, their "new priesthood" status is a very recent occurrence. Yidam Tsering was among the early Tibetan intellectuals who joined the Chinese Communist Party in the late 1950s. At the time, as a young man of common Tibetan origin, he was highly romantic about China's socialist revolution. Here is an excerpt from one of his early poems eulogizing China's socialism in the 1950s:

> Snow mountains, Oh,
> Snow mountains …
> The star you hold up above is our eye for guidance.
> A million serfs have broken their shackles and freed themselves.
> We have pronounced a death sentence to the cannibalistic society!
> Yidam Tsering 1997:23–4

Since the early 1990s and prior to his death in 2005, Yidam Tsering had shown his leading stature in the resistance of China's ethnocentric and racializing socialist project in Tibetan regions. His concern was the inequality resulting from China's nationality identification project and its subsequent policies. In both 2002 and 2003, when I met with Yidam Tsering in Sichuan and Gansu, he expressed that on the ground level, many Han Chinese cadres, in the name of the unity of all nationalities, are in fact practising *minzu-tonghua* (民族同化) or "nationality assimilation." This assimilation means that the unity uni-directionally demands minority nationalities to assimilate themselves into Han Chinese culture. He also criticized the Chinese state's ongoing campaign for the "reinforcement of patriotic spirit" (*qinghua-aiguozhuyi-jingshen* 强化爱国主义精神). According to Yidam Tsering, in practice, it is the "dilution of national consciousness" (*danhua-minzu-yishi* 淡化民族意识) and the "extraction of cultural nerves" (*zaichu-wenhua-shenjing* 摘除文化神经) of minority nationalities.

Tsering Dongrub, who is about twenty years younger than Yidam Tsering, grew up within China's socialist education system. As a young man he possessed the same romanticism about China's socialism as Yidam Tsering. He was trained at the Sichuan Provincial Institute for Minority Nationality Cadres based in Kangding, but in the 1990s, he began to question the malpractice of China's nationality policies in Tibetan regions. In his book *My Hope*, banned in 1996, Tsering Dongrub overtly contends the dominant position of the Han nationality in China's nationality identification project when he writes:

> National consciousness is a kind of social consciousness. As long as nationality exists, such consciousness also exists. … Overall, national consciousness reflects the existential value of one's nationality, demands social recognition

> from other nationalities and being brought into full play and development... National consciousness is a kind of social collective consciousness.
>
> Tsering Dongrub 1995:23–4

Similar to the life experiences of Tsering Dongrub, Oser was born into a Tibetan revolutionary family in 1966. Her father, born of Han and Tibetan parents in Kham, was a military officer in the Chinese army. For most of her life, Oser has lived in a Chinese urban environment. She was converted to Tibetan Buddhism in the late 1990s. Like many other Tibetan intellectuals who live and work in China, what is left of Oser's Tibetan cultural tradition is slim. In one of our conversations, Oser said, "All I have now is my Tibetan name and blood … I'm learning my mother tongue." Oser's personal life is an inherent part of the consequences of China's socialist "liberation" project in Tibetan regions. Like other Tibetan intellectuals of her age, she attended one of China's nationality universities that are designated to train ethnic minority students to become educators and cadres for the purpose of China's governance of its frontier peoples. Their loss of Tibetan language and customs does not indicate an abandonment of their national identity with traditional Tibet. In *Notes on Tibet*, Oser poses a question to her Tibetan blood, "It resembles a hidden river. If it persistently flows up stream, would I return to my true homeland?" (Oser 2003:432). In addition to her prolific writings, she also uses Web technology to share her articulation of Tibetan national feelings with other Tibetan scholars and students in China. Since February 2005, her blog hosted at tibetcul.net has had a total of over 260,000 visits, with numerous threaded discussions following her postings. Oser writes on topics that range from the atrocities that the Chinese communists committed against Tibetans in the 1950s and 1960s to issues of Han Chinese immigrants in Lhasa, as well as Tibetan intellectuals' contention with the Chinese state's stigmatization of Tibetans as a "barbarous people."

Tibetan intellectuals' collective emotionality in their search for Tibet's sacred, untainted past can be understood as what John Comaroff calls "neo-primordialism," which holds:

> that ethnic consciousness is a universal potentiality which is only realized – objectified, that is, into an assertive identity – under specific conditions; viz., as a reaction, on the part of a community, to threats against its integrity or interests. From this perspective, ethnicity is not a thing in or for itself, but an immanent capacity which takes on manifest form in response to external forces.
>
> Comaroff 1996:165

In other words, neo-primordialism refers to a hybrid of primordialism with instrumentalism. The former refers to an ethnic origin regarded as time-immemorial, while the latter signifies the political function of the primordial claim in establishing unified ethnic solidarity in facing the dominant. To Tibetan intellectuals residing in China, the primordially invoked nation is not their lived nation, but is an instrumentally constructed national space-in-time that differentiates "us" from "them."

The primordially oriented "new priesthood" status of Tibetan intellectuals indicates that culture, in a modern ethnic revival, is not merely a substance of the past, but, more critically, is a multi-functional instrument. Culturally, as many Tibetan scholars live in urban China, away from their homeland, the primordiality of Tibetan culture enables them to sustain the collective memory of their past. Politically, their active construction of the primordial Tibet is intended to cleanse the socialist stigmas attached to their identity. In the meantime, it empowers them to place Tibetan civilization on equal footing with that of the Han Chinese. The equality of all nationalities in China is the primary concern of Tibetan intellectuals, as shown in Yidam Tsering's opening talk at the aforementioned conference. Unlike Tibetans in exile in India and North America, the issue of Tibet's independence is not the primary concern of Tibetan intellectuals in China. Many of them have expressed that they wish to be treated as equals with Han Chinese, as well as to receive an equal economic share in China's modernization program. The gap between the rich and the poor and between the Han majority and ethnic minorities, who reside in over one-quarter of the PRC's territory, is widening.

On the cultural level, Tibetan intellectuals' "new priesthood status" is crucially reorienting the younger generations of Tibetans. These younger generations are being encouraged, with emotionally and sentimentally expressed images of Tibet's purity, to re-embrace their magnificent indigenous past. As Edward Said pointed out, pure images of a culture are meant to "exclude unwanted elements" (Said 1994:15) and are intended for self-definition that is recurrently personified with a consecrated homeland and heroic national figures. In this self-defining process, the intellectuals of the dominated group, who were trained by the dominant, possess a self-assigned mission to rescue their lost nation. They feel a strong sense of responsibility to lead their ethnic and national revival. In one collection of his poems, Yidam Tsering states, "As a son of the snow mountains, it is my irresistible responsibility to inherit and promote the culture of the Land of Snows" (Yidam Tsering 1999:34–5).

I concur with Anthony Smith's observation that ethnic consciousness is durable in this modern globalizing era. The large, overarching, multi-ethnic states, like the former Soviet Union and the PRC, have not been successful in achieving a full dissolution of ethnic differences; instead, these differences are not only returning but also gaining social and political momentum. In Western scholarship, the notions of culture and civilization are rapidly being de-essentialized and de-primordialized. However, parallel to this Western scholarly de-reifying process of culture and civilization, newly emerged nationalisms worldwide are expressed in the language of essentialization and primordialization. Contemporary Tibetan intellectuals' primordialization of Tibet is a telling example of modern ethnic nationalism. The "new priesthood" status of Tibetan intellectuals, including Oser and Tsewang Norbu, is almost inevitable because they are situated in the heart of China's superstructure, which has both physically and symbolically injured the Tibetan nation and stigmatized Tibetans. In this sense, modern Tibetan ethnic durability is fuelled by China's injurious ideological justification of its "liberation" project in Tibet.

This durability is clearly illustrated in many contemporary Tibetan intellectuals' efforts to invoke their cultural tradition prior to the establishment of China's socialist Tibet. The Buddhism they are re-embracing is not necessarily practised, but it is instrumental in reclaiming Tibetan cultural identity. In this sense, I regard Tibetan intellectuals' search for a primordial Tibet as their collective work in order to contend with the Chinese state's stigmatization of Tibetan culture.

8 Conclusion

Globalization, performance religion, mindscaping the eco-Buddhist Tibet

The revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism in the political domain of China is not merely a local event but is in every way connected with globalization, the worldwide market system, global discourses on local humanitarian issues, and the emergence of modern Buddhism. In this kaleidoscopic scene of local Tibetan Buddhist revivals and global imaginations of Tibet, politics, economics, religion, and spirituality all mutually saturate and transform each other. In the midst of these dynamics, Tibetan Buddhism continues to be represented in a plural nature as it embodies the complexity of its local, national, and global nexuses. Likewise, the Sino-Tibetan ethnic and Buddhist relations are also expressed in the same degree of complexity. Global media, equipped with sophisticated information communication technology, are the primary vehicles for the unprecedented revitalizations of Tibetan Buddhism in China, and for transmitting the global concerns of the Tibet Question into China's political domain. Global media are the "fast lane" of modern communication, which produce and disseminate images of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism through video footage, photographic depictions, cyber discussions, and ultimately, popular imagination. The immediacy of Tibetan Buddhist communities and landscapes in their actual geographic locations is being electronically transported elsewhere. In turn, globally circulated images and narratives concerning Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism stream back into the Tibetan and non-Tibetan regions of China. In this sense, although Tibetan Buddhism is reviving, it is still subject to the whims of various social, economic, and political forces. In other words, Tibetan Buddhism is simultaneously a vehicle of Buddhist enlightenment, a commercial tool, and a political instrument.

In this concluding chapter, I reiterate that many revitalizations of Tibetan Buddhism in China are mostly the work of the global market economy and Western-based modern Buddhism. Economic globalization has pressured and prompted the Chinese state, in its earlier stage of economic reform, to reconstruct its global public image to appear tolerant to the revival of traditional Tibetan culture. Globalization is not limited to transnational commercial transactions. Within its infrastructure, multiple globalizations are taking place, among which the globalization of religions and humanitarian issues is a prominent phenomenon worldwide. Herein, I wish to highlight the impact of this multifaceted globalization on the Tibetan Buddhist revival. In the case of China, economic globalization brought forth privatization, initially only in the economic sense; however,

when economic globalization is connected with the globalization of religion and geopolitics, it spreads to the dynamic social, psychological, and ontological dimensions of contemporary Chinese society.

By specifically situating my discussion in the context of modern Buddhism, I emphasize that Tibetan Buddhism is adopted by non-Tibetan Buddhists and the Chinese state for divergent purposes. In other words, Tibetan Buddhism is not only practised but also performed with varied spiritual or sociopolitical volitions. From the perspective of modern Buddhist studies, Tibetan Buddhism in contemporary China and elsewhere is an ecospirituality in the sense of the New Age movements worldwide. This ecospirituality connects the global discourses on the revitalizations and in some cases re-creations of once suppressed earth-based native beliefs and practices with indigenous religious systems' consideration for the ecological well-being of the planet.

Globalization and religions

The history of the globalization of world religions encompasses a much longer time span than the current economic globalization. By world religions, I mean those religious traditions whose canons possess universal claims, and have crossed multiple ethnic and cultural boundaries since their inception. Their commonality lies in what Paul Tillich once called "the ultimate concern" (1965), pertaining to the ontological, soteriological, and eschatological dimensions of humankind. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism whose pre-modern histories already show their cross-regional and global trails, are the primary examples of world religions. The history of the globalization of Buddhism began at least two thousand years ago in routes from ancient India to Nepal, Bhutan, China, and Central Asian nations. Likewise, Christianity rapidly expanded into Europe and Asia through the trade routes of the Roman Empire. During the pre-modern era, the spread of Buddhism and Islam in Central and East Asia had a similar pattern that relied on commercial routes, the most famous of which being the Silk Road. Both religious and ethnic demographics in these regions have undergone much change since the arrival of Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. Many of the Central and Inner Asian peoples such as Afghans and Uyghurs were Buddhists prior to the commercial and military conquest by Arab Muslims. Religious conversion processes were inherently linked to cross-regional commercial, political, and military engagements. The allegedly divine or enlightened worlds moved with the material activities of human societies.

The current globalization of religions retains similar dependency upon the transnational routes of regional economics, except that its speed is indeed "supersonic" in comparison with how King Asoka of the Indian Mauryn Dynasty missionized Buddhism or how the Christianized Roman Empire proselytized their religion to ancient Europe. The ongoing economic globalization "marks the compression of space and time" (Alexander 2007:82). As a conduit, it directs the flow of not only economic transactions of different regions and nations of the world but also the geopolitics, local social issues, organized religious expressions, externalized individual spiritualities, and regional collective discontent toward

worldwide modernization. Meanwhile, the globalization of religions is no longer limited just to world religions; Shamanic and tribal-scale religious practices are also being rapidly globalized. Undoubtedly, globalization has a totalizing effect in which the space and time of different economic and cultural systems are compressed into what the cliché indicates as the "Global Village." The concept of the "Global Village" is both concrete and abstract. It is concrete because of the fast movements of capital, technology, resources, products, human ideas, and specialized talents worldwide. It is abstract in the sense that globalization is also a supra-cultural and supra-national idea, one that appears to transcend all human differences though in reality does not. The "Global Village" has no unified identity, but is a "village" of differences and conflicts which mirror actual international relations.

Thus, on the theoretical front, globalization can be seen as "a social phenomenon that in itself is neither sacred nor profane" (ibid.:82) or as what Mike Featherstone refers to as "a singular place" (Featherstone 1990:6). However, whether it is sacred or profane in the religious sense, or whether it is value-neutral in the supra-national sense is up for debate. From an economic standpoint, globalization is saturated with the dominant players' corporate and national interests, while from a supra-cultural perspective, it is a "place" where all contradictions exist. As Featherstone points out, this includes "the imperial hegemony of a single nation or power bloc, or the triumph of a trading company, universal proletariat, a form of religion, or world-federalist movement" (ibid.:6). From the post-modern geographic perspective, globalization as a place is not a physical location, an organic community, or a nation-state. As Timothy Oakes remarks, place in the context of globalization is more "a dynamic web than a specific site or location. It is in this way that place becomes the geographical expression of the interactions between individual action and abstract historical process" (Oaks 1997:510). As a place of the placelessness of human actions, globalization could be a thing-in-itself. The popular cognition and usage of the word "globalization" has already gone beyond the global circulation of local and regional material productions of all sorts. It is now an abstract concept that is fluid enough to encompass a variety of human ideas and actions that have both global and local implications.

Based on his reading of Kopytoff's and Hannerz's works, Featherstone points out that globalization as a placeless place:

> … can also be understood as leading to a global ecumene, defined as a "region of persistent culture interaction and exchange" (Kopytoff, 1987:10; Hannerz, 1989). A process whereby a series of cultural flows produce both: firstly, cultural homogeneity and cultural disorder, in linking together previously isolated pockets of relatively homogeneous culture which in turn produces more complex images of the other as well as generating identity-reinforcing reactions; and also secondly, transnational cultures, which can be understood as genuine "third cultures" which are orientated beyond national boundaries.
>
> Featherstone 1990:6

The popular usage of the word globalization has already cognitively indicated its psychological and intellectual acceptance as an abstract cultural idea. My

exegesis of Featherstone's assessment includes the terms "global ecumene" and "third cultures," both of which essentially signify the same global flows of human ideas, goods and services. This global ecumene is then synonymous with Hannerz's idea that "world culture" encompasses both diversity and uniformity, or that "the world has become one network of social relationships, and between its different regions there is a flow of meanings as well as of people and goods" (Hannerz 1990:237).

That said, the globalization of religions, including Tibetan Buddhism, is an integral part of this global ecumene in which there is no single dominant religion and, whether convergent or divergent in doctrine, multiple religious traditions are simultaneously present. In other words, the globalization of religions reflects the simultaneous global presence of humanisms from different cultural origins. In the theological sense, this presence has become what Hans Küng calls a "global ecumenical consciousness" as a result of our overcoming "isolation and learning to grasp the reality of the others" (Küng 1986:xiii). To add more to Küng's words, I think that this global ecumenical consciousness is a process in which different manifestations of humanity across the globe are undergoing an expansion of their culturally and nationally bound horizons by the conscious transgression of both natural and artificial boundaries. In this regard, the global ecumene is the same as the "Global Village" with the etymon of "ecumene" referring to house, village, and habitat. In relation to the globality of humanity, it also signifies "the whole inhabited world" (ibid.:xiv). It is in this placeless global ecumene where the interface of differing human traditions occurs. Inter-civilizational and inter-religious encounters are compressed into this place, where "the fate of humankind as a species will be central to the politics of the global human condition in the coming decades" (Robertson 2000:73). Religion plays a significant role in global discourses on humanitarian issues across the globe. In this sense, globalization of religions is not merely about the propagation of religious doctrines for winning more converts. More critically, it pertains to how religions are practised as objects of representations, systems of moral justifications for social actions, sanctuaries for modern refugees, instruments for harnessing sociopolitical capital and commercial profit, and sources for modern spiritualization of personal lives. In this global context, religions, small or large, are undergoing transformative changes parallel to the development of the global market economy worldwide.

Performing Tibetan Buddhism

Religion in this era of globalization is often expressed in differently intended practices in the social and political arenas on both local and global scales. I share a similar perspective with Martin Geoffroy and Peter Beyer that "globalization is structurally favoring the privatization of religion" (Geoffroy 2004:34). It almost inevitably leads to what Geoffroy and Beyer call "performance religion" (ibid.:34), as privatization is synonymous with marketization in the context of market economy. In the case of China, Buddhism in general and Tibetan Buddhism in particular are being marketed or made available to the public space through the global market as discussed in the latter part of this book. The overwhelming

economic and technological power of the global market system is overshadowing the monastic authority of Buddhism throughout China and parts of Tibet. Both Geoffroy and Beyer predict performance religion to be the future trend of religion worldwide (ibid.:34). In fact, it has already been an ongoing trend in the globalization of religion for nearly three decades, especially since the late 1980s. Religion is both performed and performing in globally connected local public spaces, not only for the actual psychological and spiritual needs of religious adherents, but also for engendering social and political discourses on issues that affect religion and what it represents.

In addition to its traditional dogmas and spirituality, religion in contemporary societies is being harnessed as "a cultural resource" (ibid.:35) or symbolic capital in a Bourdieusian sense. However, the deployment of such a resource or capital varies drastically from one interest group to another, from one nation-state to another, and from one power-bloc to another. It is subject to differing representations and sociopolitical volitions, and can be both glorified and demonized in order to generate public consensuses for the purpose of marking ideological and political boundaries. In this sense, religion as a cultural resource is performed to both unite and divide. It gives legitimacy to sustain a geopolitical campaign of governmental interests and non-governmental humanitarian concerns, to reinforce a national identity, and to construct a worldwide imagined community of the concerned cultural and ethnic constituency and its allies.

Tibetan Buddhism in and outside the Chinese political domain is a prototype of performance religion. In both its domestic and international political realms, its performances manifest themselves in polarizing terms in relation to the Tibet Question. In my ethnographic experience, the pattern of the geopolitical performances of Tibetan Buddhism is this: they have little to do with Buddhist practice itself, neither is there much public space for Tibetans' own voice in and outside of China. Since March 14, 2008, the global circulations of both Western and Chinese media representations of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism have illuminated this pattern. The Tibetans are caught in the mutual siege by the West and the Chinese state as both are claiming a higher moral ground on the Tibet Question. While the West continues to highlight its allegation of the Chinese state's occupation of Tibet, China mobilizes its resources to represent itself as a liberator emancipating Tibetans from their "barbarous" traditional society. The traditional Tibetan Buddhist governing system, to both sides, is the cultural resource used to construct polarized images of Tibet. On one side, that of the West, Old Tibet was a Buddhist paradise on earth and New Tibet has no religious freedom; whereas on the China side, Old Tibet was a slavery system worse than medieval Europe and New Tibet enjoys religious freedom and the material support from the state. There is little genuine dialogue between the West and China; each accuses the other of engineering smear campaigns for advancing its own national and geopolitical interests.

In the midst of the polarizing images of traditional Tibet worldwide, the global market economy has brought forth a third image of Tibet in which both international and domestic tourist industries promote the sublime landscape of Tibet and large, bustling monastic establishments throughout the entirety of cultural Tibet.

This third image is subverting both China and the West's politically engendered images of Tibet. The two extremes are obviously negatively dependent upon each other, and yet they are encountering the plurality of images and narratives concerning Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. While the Chinese state continues to sustain its split image of Old and New Tibet through productions such as *The Past of Tibet* and *The Dalai Lama* (CCTV 2008a, 2008b), it also utilizes modern market mechanisms, along with state ideology, to exercise a global public diplomacy demonstrating the religious freedom in Tibet. In this state performance, the image of Tibetan Buddhism is becoming what I call "tourist Buddhism" and "socialist Buddhism." The former signifies that Tibetan Buddhism is being employed as an economic tool of the Chinese state in order to cultivate and expand the consumer market for Tibetan culture, religion, and landscape. The latter refers to the Chinese state's effort to control and transfigure Tibetan Buddhism with its own state ideology and national interests.

In spite of its persistent diatribe on Old Tibet, the Chinese state relies on Tibet's Buddhist heritage to promote tourism in Tibetan regions. Tourist attractions are nearly all Buddhism-based, e.g. the Potala Palace, Jokhang Monastery, Kunbum Monastery, and Labrung Monastery, Lake Namtso, and Lake Tsongopo. In 2006, after the completion of the Beijing–Lhasa railway, the overwhelming number of tourists heading to Lhasa was described in Chinese media as *jingpen* (井喷) or "blowout," meaning that the number of tourists had surpassed the carrying capacity of Lhasa's tourist facilities: hotels, restaurants, and transportation. According to Xinhua Net, in 2007, Lhasa received over four million tourists, a record-breaking number. Although this number decreased by 44 percent in March 2008 due to Tibetan demonstrations, it quickly rose again in 2009. For the first six months of 2009, over 1.5 million tourists poured into Lhasa and brought ¥113 million (RMB) in revenue to the city (Niu *et al.* 2009). In Amdo, Kunbum Monastery or Ta'er Monastery in Chinese, for instance, is also a popular site of tourist Buddhism. Between 2003 and 2007, the annual number of tourists increased from 1.1 million to 2 million. Both domestic and international tourists are unstoppably entering Tibet.

The local bureau of tourism and secular authorities require the Tibetan monastic system, now inundated with tourists, to comply with consumer demands and their overall plan for the promotion of tourism. On the political front, tourism is not merely a consumer activity. It also yields diverse public opinions about the current state of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. These public opinions do not suddenly overturn the negative polls of the West about what China has done in Tibet since the 1950s, but begin to generate both public and scholarly interest in independent findings about the current state of Tibet. This political effect of tourist Buddhism in all Tibetan regions seems to favor China's public diplomacy effort as well as conforming to the regulatory and ideological framework of how the Chinese state maneuvers Tibetan Buddhism for its territorial interest and geopolitical advantage; however, it has not yet made a difference in terms of generating a more positive image of China regarding the Tibet Question.

Meanwhile, Tibetan Buddhism is also performed as the "socialist Buddhism" under China's rule. The intended embedment of "socialism" in religion is a core

aspect of China's modernization program with "Chinese characteristics," as discussed in Chapter 6. These "characteristics," in the context of religion, are essentially Chinese socialist values and atheistic attitudes toward religion in the guise of regarding religion as "a cultural phenomenon" or "a historical process" (Wu 2003) which, according to Chinese Marxist perspective, will eventually meet its demise. President Hu Jintao continues with the emphasis of Jiang Zemin, his predecessor, on the implementation of *zongjiao-yu-shehuizhuyi-xiangshiying* (宗教与社会主义相适应) or "the compatibility of religion with socialism" (Wu 2000) policy which is done in a dual course through administrative channels and academic research.

In the case of Tibetan Buddhism, the "socialist compatibility" research and policy implementation was initiated in 2003. The China Tibetology Research Center, a leading governmental research institution based in Beijing, plays a crucial role in defining what socialist compatibility means to Tibetan Buddhism. As the organizer and funding sponsor of this state project, the Center lays out the groundwork for identifying the "compatibility" of Tibetan Buddhism with Chinese socialism in such areas as the management of monasteries with modern methods, Buddhist cultural practices, the selection of *tulkus*, the secularization of Tibetan Buddhism, and the Party's religious policy in Tibetan regions over the last half century (Li 2001). The essence of this socialist compatibility in Tibet points to the 14th Dalai Lama in relation to Tibet's traditional polity with both religious and secular authorities, the allegation of his global separatist activities, and his alliance with the West.

Thus in practice, the intended "socialist Tibetan Buddhism" has little socialist content. China does not so much insert socialism in practice into Tibetan Buddhism as assert its sovereignty over Tibet, modernizing Tibetan Buddhism in a way that conforms to how monasteries are regulated elsewhere in China as shown in Chapter 5. Socialism in this project is obviously utilized as the moral and ideological justification for China's self-claimed "liberating" role in demolishing Tibet's traditional governing system. This aspect of the "socialist Tibetan Buddhism" project is commissioned to reinforce the severance of Tibetan Buddhism's traditional tie with the Dalai Lama as both the secular and religious leader of Tibet. Thus, this "Tibetan Buddhism" with Chinese characteristics is supposed to have the political, cultural, and religious effect that both Tibetan monastic and lay populations divorce themselves from the Dalai Lama. State resources are allocated toward this goal. Shortly after Tibetan demonstrations in March 2008, CCTV aired a state production titled *The Dalai Lama*, a documentary series that visually narrated the "political evolution" of the 14th Dalai Lama from a young peasant boy to the ultimate living Buddha of Tibet and finally to a separatist (CCTV 2008b). The narratives in the series lead the audience to the expected conclusion that the Dalai Lama aligns with unnamed hostile Western interest groups that allegedly intend to separate Tibet from China. On January 19, 2009, the Chinese state announced the formal implementation of "the Million Serf Liberation Day" as an official holiday for Tibetans (Gesang Dawa 2009). March 28 is designated for this new holiday, commemorating March 28, 1959, the date on which the People's Republic of China established Tibet Autonomous Region. This historical date is marked as the

demise of Old Tibet and the birth of New Tibet. As *Tibet Daily*, an official Chinese newspaper states:

> This is forever a memorable political holiday. For a long time the Dalai Clique has never forgotten the serfdom of Old Tibet as it continues to peddle the so-called "Tibet Question" by viciously attacking the autonomous social system, engineering sabotaging activities, hindering the socialist path of New Tibet, and attempting to revive the reactionary, the dark, the barbarous, and the backward theocracy of feudalism and slavery. Honoring the Million Serf Liberation Day is a great momentous success in our fighting Dalai Clique's separatism …
>
> Gesang Dawa 2009

In these state acts, traditional forms of Tibetan Buddhism represented by the Dalai Lama have a performative value for China's denouncement of traditional Tibet as a "barbarous" social system. Since the early 1980s when China permitted the revival of Tibetan Buddhism, it has been the Chinese state's overt attempt to divorce the institution and the person of the Dalai Lama from the reviving Tibetan Buddhism under the rule of China. Thus, the "socialist compatibility" project is meant to materialize the intended severance between the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism. However, it has not been successful on either global or domestic levels.

As a matter of fact, the Chinese state's diatribe against both the institution and the person of the Dalai Lama rather serves only to increase the global charisma of the Dalai Lama. The more China fights it, the more it grows. China's construction of the public image of the Dalai Lama is diametrically opposing its Western counterpart. In the West, the Dalai Lama has already become a household word. Unlike the decades between the 1960s and the 1980s, the current image of the Dalai Lama in the West is a universal symbol of human spiritual values and an embodiment of Buddhist compassion and wisdom; he is a global leader for world peace, a leading religious figure promoting dialogues between religion and science, and finally a victim of humanitarian crisis. In spite of China's referencing and translating such publications as *Orphans of the Cold War* (Knaus 1999), *Buddha's Warriors* (Dunham 2004), and *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet* (Conboy and Morrison 2002) by scholars and former intelligence agents regarding the allegation of his association with CIA, the global charisma of the Dalai Lama continues to grow. Thus, for that audience, attacking the Dalai Lama means attacking world peace and human universal values. When the Chinese state's antithetically vehement voice is internationally broadcast, it is met with the challenges, contestations, protests, and resistances of the global public outside of China. In this respect, China is both alienating itself from and being alienated by the global pubic. Thus, China is losing its global public diplomacy on the Tibet Question. It seems too late for China to pull itself out of this self-initiated dialectic of Old and New Tibet as it has already locked itself into its perceived "higher" moral ground based on communist liberation ideology. Reversion of history is no longer an option. In this regard, the revival

of Tibetan Buddhism is permitted but subject to being performed as a "socialist Buddhism" or a Buddhism "compatible" with China's socialist system.

Buddhist Tibet – a site of China's masculine protest

Tibetan Buddhism, whether performed in its traditional forms in Tibet or in the consumer market of religions and political arenas in China and beyond, has been an integral part of a global phenomenon known as the "imagined Tibet," a multi-dimensional and generative cultural process mostly taking place outside Tibet. Imagined Tibets in and outside China are results of the globalization of Buddhism and humanitarian issues in Tibet. While China has imagined and constructed Old Tibet with a Marxist perspective and New Tibet with a socialist appearance, Tibet elsewhere in the world, especially in the West, is imagined as a spiritually exotic other in religious and cultural terms. Meanwhile, since the annexation of Tibet to the PRC, the global media have referred to Tibet as a place of human sufferings due to China's socialist modernization. When China's Tibet and the West's Tibet are juxtaposed, it is not difficult to see the inter-connected pattern of how these two Tibets are imagined and articulated: they are opposite to each other just like day and night. China's Old Tibet is a place laden with miseries, while the West's Tibet, in the traditional sense, is a storehouse of spiritual treasures that have relevance in and even curing capacity for modern psychological and environmental illnesses. China's New Tibet is supposedly a modernized Tibet with material abundance based on the communist projection of human future; whereas to the West, this New Tibet is a site of human tragedy where human rights violation and environmental degradation are committed in the name of progress and China's sovereignty. These two diametrically opposing Tibets feed into each other's defense and growth.

Craig Janes remarks that this unprecedented imagination of Tibets is a result of the interplay between Western Dharma bums, Chinese modernity, and the geopolitics of the Tibet Question:

> On the one hand are the various institutions of the Chinese state that have exercised direct control over Tibet since the 1950s. On the other are the multitude of individuals, interest groups, and organizations on the global scene that exert a far more diffuse, but increasingly important, influence over Tibetan life and cultural identity. In this mix are Western tourists, who have a certain stake in maintaining an exotically religious Tibetan Other, Tibetan refugee communities and the Tibetan government-in-exile, who find in Western exotic yearnings a voice for their own political agenda, and a block of right-wing Western political ideologues who see in a certain kind of Tibetan suffering a useful way to demonize China.
>
> Janes 1999:403

China's construct of Old Tibet has obviously become a state instrument for legitimizing China's socialist modernity in Tibet. It no longer produces fresh points for the global public; instead, it faces resentment as stale propaganda. Its negative

portrayal of traditional Tibet rather fertilizes the growing image of Tibet as the last spiritual and ecological sacred site of the planet earth, pristine, but endangered by Chinese modernization. In this dialectic of two differently imagined Tibets, the West's Tibet is gaining more and more momentum on the global scene as it appears colorful, inclusive, and spiritually elating. It is concentrated with popular yearnings for authentic spirituality and genuine public discourses on issues of human rights and the preservation of indigenous ecological worldviews and cultural heritages.

The Chinese Buddhists who embrace Buddhist Tibet are inevitably becoming recipients of the Tibet imagined in the West which is streaming into China through the conduits of globalization. This imagined Tibet in the West is a moral ground for "a growing Western-spawned outcry over 'human rights'" (Janes 1999:393), whereas among Chinese Buddhists and seekers, it is taken in as an equivalent of what would be considered New Age spirituality in North America. Both Chinese Buddhist pilgrims and tourists are pouring into Tibet to quench their thirst for blessings, exotic cultural forms, and a cleaner place on earth. To many of the Chinese who come to Tibet, it is a passage to an enlightened world, or a pure-land in the literal sense, as it possesses ritual techniques, spiritual power, and ecological sublimity, all of which are absent in most parts of China. With its fixation on purely material development, modern socialist China is more of a nuisance than enrichment to Tibet's peaceful union of humanity and nature.

Historically speaking, it is worthwhile to highlight that Chinese modernization ideas and implementations since 1949 have been emphatically manifested as what Alfred Adler calls the "masculine protest," a symptom of obsessional neurosis as a result of somatic inferiority and psychic overcompensation "as if the patient wished to change from a woman to a man" (Adler 1998:100). The modern history of China since the mid-nineteenth century is full of humiliating and undoubtedly traumatic events, such as the Opium War and the invasion by Japan. However, these collectively experienced traumas have not been healed in the socialist era. Socialist China's approach for the erasure of its historical humiliation has been a dual course: on one hand it has used Marxist class analysis to single out one segment of its own population as the scapegoat for past suffering. On the other hand, it has been aping Japan and the West's modernization, as though becoming materially equal would eliminate any prior humiliation. This fits the compensation tendency of the obsessional neurotic, that is, the obsessive acquisition of the power of the dominant and a fixation on past traumas. From the perspective of clinical psychoanalysis, the Chinese socialist path has shown itself to have what Freud calls a "fixation upon traumas," by which he means, "the traumatic neuroses demonstrate very clearly that a fixation to the moment of the traumatic occurrence lies at their root" (Freud 1943:243). Historically, the modern Chinese populace was directed to countless class-struggle sessions. The Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s and the Great Cultural Revolution were the highlights of modern China's masculine protest, whose goals were obviously fixated upon manufacturing and displaying the nation's power to the West. The human cost for this state masculine protest was high. Recovery from past traumas did not take place; instead, fresh traumas were generated. Against this backdrop,

history has become a linear process where the only meanings and values of life are to be found. Since the 1950s, this neurotic modernity had been literally transferred to Tibet where the mass socialist campaigns and movements were identical to what had been implemented in China. In the same manner, the class struggle sessions became a “national pastime” (Anagnost 1997) in Tibet. These sessions were neurotic in nature as “they put all their interest into collecting proof of their injury and building up their aggression against their environment” (Adler 1998:104). Discontentment with the existing cultural environment was expressed in its destruction for the sake of welcoming a communist utopia. Chinese Marxism clearly showed its arrogance in its indifference to cultural and ethnic differences as if everything could be unified without taking into consideration differences as an inherent part of the evolution of human diversity. This state ideology itself is obsessionally neurotic in nature as it is “incapable of adjusting itself to reality because it is always striving toward an impossible ideal” (ibid.:xvi).

The era of socialist mass movements and campaigns eventually ended by the 1980s; however, the Chinese state’s masculine protest continues in its modernization program in Tibet. Comparatively speaking, since the 1980s, the Chinese have embraced Western style modernization, while the Tibetans have taken China’s economic reform as an opportunity to revitalize their culture and religion (Goldstein and Kapstein 1998). The Chinese display their growth-based prowess in their expanding market economy, new technologies, highways, railways, aviation routes, and hydraulic dams in both China and Tibet; whereas the Tibetans are resuming their traditional ways of being, especially in the religious sense. This does not mean that the Tibetans are turning the clock back to their traditional society. Although the Chinese are mostly responsible for introducing modern ideas and practices, the Tibetans are nevertheless gradually carving out their own passage of modernity by combining revived religious traditions, globalized Western Tibetan Buddhism, and the Chinese market. On both national and international scales, modernization is affecting Tibet, while Tibetan culture and religion are becoming more and more outbound. Both Buddhist and Bonpo lamas travel to urban China for religious teachings and ritual performances. Tibetan religious paraphernalia are consumer products of Chinese Buddhists and “cool hunters.” Stores that promote Tibetan arts and crafts and publications concerning Tibet are becoming popular shopping sites in metropolitan centers such as Beijing, Xi’an, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. In this regard, the materialization of China’s masculine protest in its ever-expanding modernization infrastructure in Tibet inadvertently links Tibet and Tibetans to the global public.

Tibetan Buddhism as an emerging modern Buddhism in China

On the surface, the revitalizations of Tibetan Buddhism appear to be the result of China’s tolerance of “Tibetanization” (Barnett 2006) in the 1980s and early 1990s, as well as of the availability of alternative social space of religion the infrastructure of economic globalization. The emergence of the market for the consumption of religions in China does suggest a neo-liberal triumph in terms

of privatization and the market economy, bringing forth diverse civil discourses, religious pluralism, and democracy. By looking at the current intersections of the politics of religion and consumerism in China, it is not difficult to find the existence of genuine practice of Tibetan Buddhism. These external social and political conditions have worked in favor of the return of Tibetan Buddhism, but do not explain why Chinese Buddhists are increasingly attracted to it, especially when other competing religions such as Christianity, Islam, Taoism, and Chinese Buddhism are readily available. In my findings I see what is known in the West as "modern Buddhism" playing a global role in revitalizing different Buddhist traditions, including Tibetan Buddhism, in their Asian homelands but with the addition of a modern, Western appearance. Tibetan Buddhism outside of Tibet is integral to Western-based modern Buddhism. Its characteristics include an emphasis on the spirituality of Buddha Dharma, minimum traditional ritual performances, simplicity of the physical gathering space, the availability of publications and cyber-community, socially engaged practices, and increased lay over monastic authority.

Modern Buddhism is a result of the indigenization of Buddhism in the West, which incorporates modern secular Western values such as science, rationalism, egalitarianism, individualism, and anti-hierarchy. When Buddhism is "modernized" in such a fashion, the idea of modernity is not a temporal marker of the old and the new but a qualitative gauge that distinguishes itself from the rest of the world; as Theodor Adorno remarked, "Modernity is a qualitative, not a chronological category" (Adorno 1974:218). The quality of modern Buddhism is distinctly Western, with a set of universally claimed aforementioned values based on European Enlightenment.

But, as a pre-modern and regional religion, why is Buddhism being chosen for modernization in a global scene? In the global market of religion and spirituality, the widespread collective imagination of Buddhism as a viable path toward the ultimate spiritual liberation is especially noticeable. In her assessment of this global imagination of a pre-modern religion, Marilyn Ivy asserts that Buddhism is both historical and trans-historical:

> (1) Buddhism as object of modern fantasy and longing, bearing the nostalgic freight of the premodern and the non-Western; (2) Buddhism as a transhistorical religion comprising transcendent technologies of liberation, thus intrinsically empty of historical signification or cultural baggage: the way it is, when- and wherever.
>
> Ivy 2005:313

This trans-historical quality of Buddhism is fully embraced by Western converts while its historical and culturally specific "baggage" is selectively filtered out. Although Buddhism is a pre-modern religion, it nevertheless possesses qualities that are a universal point of reference in both a religious and a spiritual sense as it emphasizes the nature of sentience and the path of enlightenment. It refers to all life-forms rather than a specific human group regardless of the fact that the teachings of the historical Buddha were facilitated in a geographically, culturally, and

linguistically specific environment. Thus, the trans-historical aspect of Buddhism could be placed in or adopted by any historically and culturally specific milieu. The material expression of the contradictory qualities of Buddhist pre-modernity and trans-historicity lies in a two-way traffic in the modern West: while an increasing number of Westerners have embraced the trans-historical and trans-cultural qualities of Buddhist teachings, they also transform the religion itself with their own ideals and sociocultural and economic practices.

It is worth noting that because of the global power-status of the West, the localization of Buddhism in the West is almost simultaneously parallel to the globalization of emerging modern Buddhism. This unique phenomenon of the simultaneous localization and globalization of Buddhism is an inherent part of the globalizing West. What is localized is also reformed with aforementioned modern Western values. What is globalized is a form of Buddhism syncretized with these globalized local values and corresponding cultural practices. Furthermore, the globalized modern Buddhism oftentimes travels back to regions and countries that are traditionally known as hosts of different Buddhist sects; thus it competes with and transforms locally existing counterparts.

While the 14th Dalai Lama deserves the credit for spreading Tibetan Buddhism in the West since the early 1960s, Western Buddhists are responsible for indigenizing, modernizing, and globalizing Tibetan Buddhism as a modern form of Buddhism with Western values and methods of practice. Tibetan Buddhism outside of Tibet is also making its way into China and Tibet as a form of modern Buddhism. Tibetans in Tibetan regions are not yet receptive to it; however, it is gaining popularity among Chinese Buddhists and spiritual seekers. On March 15 and 16, 2007 I attended the Dharma talks of Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, a renowned Tibetan Dharma Master and film director, at the Overseas Exchange Center of Peking University. This event was a milestone marking Tibetan Buddhism's entrance into the mainstream of China. The Buddhism that Dzongsar Rinpoche brought to Beijing has little resemblance to traditional forms of Tibetan Buddhism. The style of his Dharma talks bears the signature of modern Buddhism from the West: de-emphasizing formality, empowering the audience by underpinning Buddhist and Western philosophical values that encourage the realization of individual potentials, and connecting Buddhist teachings with modern issues. He remarked that it is unfortunate that the historical Buddha's teachings became "Buddhism," meaning that Buddhism is not a conventional religion but a way of discovering truths. His categorical separation of Buddhism from religion conforms to Western modern Buddhist tendency of emphasizing the historical purity and rationality of Sakyamuni Buddha's teachings (Ivy 2005:314). Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche's presence at Peking University also marks a trend of modern Buddhism: Dharma teachings are taking place in secular space more often than in monastic environments.

The names of Tibetan Dharma celebrities in the West such as Sogyal Rinpoche, Pedma Chodron, and Dilgo Khyentse had already become popular among Chinese Tibetan Buddhists before Dzongsar Rinpoche arrived in Beijing. Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (2002) continues to be a Buddhist bestseller in China. It is particularly popular among Chinese college

students and professors. Those who cannot afford to buy it from bookstores can easily find photocopies in the backrooms of private Buddhist bookstores. Many of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's books, such as *The Heart Treasures of Enlightened Ones* (1992), *The Excellent Path to Enlightenment* (1993), and *The Hundred Verses of Advice* (2002), have also been translated into Chinese. Pema Chodron's *When Things Fall Apart* (2002) and *The Places that Scare You* (2001) are on display shelves of airport bookstores in Beijing, Xining, Xiamen, and Shanghai. Dangdang Net, the largest online bookstore in China, offers free delivery of her books. Both legal and pirated publications on Tibetan Buddhism are gaining popularity. Since the 14th Dalai Lama began to visit Taiwan in the mid-1990s, publications on Tibetan Buddhism have proliferated there. Many of these publications are being pirated and are sold at high prices, surreptitiously, at private Buddhist bookstores in China. Images and literary products of Tibetan Buddhism in North America are streaming into China through the routes of the global market.

At the same time, Tibetan teachers are also teaching Buddhism to Chinese seekers in the language of modern science. The adoption of modern scientific language by Tibetan lamas, on the one hand, is an integral part of their effort to rescue Tibetan Buddhism from the Chinese communist stigmatization of religion as superstition, as discussed in Chapter 6. On the other hand, publicly active Tibetan lamas in China also recognize modern science not only as an ideology but also as a collective worldview among contemporary Chinese; thus, in the Buddhist sense, the use of modern scientific language for promulgating Tibetan Buddhism is considered skillful. It is becoming commonplace for an emerging number of Tibetan teachers in China to adopt the style of modern Buddhist masters in the West in order to articulate Tibetan Buddhism to their Chinese audience. In 2004, Ahyang Rig Drobpa Rinpoche, a lesser-known young Nyingma lay teacher, had his *The Rinpoche of Tibet* published in Chinese. It was marketed as "A Manual for Modern Spirituality" (2004). With an emphasis on the popularity of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, most of the book promotes Tibetan Buddhist spirituality as the best medicine for modern psychological illnesses resulting from industrialization. It praises Western scientific achievements, meanwhile calling readers' attention to Tibetan Buddhism as a science of spirituality, a complement to what modern science does not cover. In my conversations with Ahyang Rig Drobpa Rinpoche in 2007, I asked him why it was important for him to emphasize modern science in counterpoint to the Chinese state's use of science as a part of the state ideology to suppress religions. His answer was that in China, modern science is deeply rooted in the popular consciousness, just like a religion. By linking Buddhism with modern science in a positive manner, he finds it easier to connect Tibetan Buddhism with his Chinese readers. Furthermore, from his perspective, most Chinese Buddhists know little about Tibetan culture; therefore, it is more important to transmit Tibetan Buddhist teachings rather than Tibetan culture to the Chinese. Like their Western counterparts, Ahyang Rig Drobpa Rinpoche and other young Tibetan teachers in China are also filtering Tibetan culture while presenting Tibetan Buddhism to their Chinese adherents. If the Chinese state lifts its tight regulations on the mobility of Tibetan Buddhist lamas, it is

likely that Tibetan Buddhism from Tibet and the West will more quickly take root among the Chinese as a viable form of modern Buddhism.

Mindscaping the landscape of high altitude enlightenment in the twenty-first century

While finishing the final chapter of this book in my Beijing apartment, a friend of mine, an Australian graduate student, came by with his Tibetan fiancée after returning from Kham, where he had lived for a year teaching English to a young *tulku* and practising Tibetan Buddhism. I took the opportunity to ask him about how imagination and fantasy played a role in his embracing of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibet. His response was direct: "It's all about imagination. Tibetan tantric practice requires imagination and visualization as a vehicle of enlightenment in this world." While he was in Kham, his Tibetan fiancée was in Beijing rigorously learning Mandarin. Her two brothers are Nyingmapa monks, and one of them is a *tulku*. As their monastery receives more and more Chinese pilgrims from China and overseas, her *tulku* brother commissioned her to learn Mandarin for the purpose of her future translation work for Chinese Buddhists who have been donating funds to his monastery since the late 1990s. In our remaining conversations, we shared our mutual recognition of a trend in non-Tibetans' fascination for Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism: what drives many Western and Chinese Buddhists to travel to Tibet's high altitudes for their pilgrimages is their imagination of Buddhist enlightenment in both spiritual and practical terms. This imagination is both spontaneous and guided in the sense that the excitement generated by a faraway place and the actual methodic visualization of the enlightened state of being require the initiation and the active use of such imagination as an inherent part of the human creative mind. Unfortunately, this imaginative trend of modern Tibetan Buddhism is undergoing negative critiques from academics.

Many scholars of Tibetan studies in China often participate in conferences and media interviews critiquing Western popular imagination of Tibet. More often than not, their critiques align with the Chinese state's intent to discredit the traditional society of Tibet in the past, and the Western popular sympathy for contemporary Tibetans who live under a state that marginalizes religion and other civil rights of its citizens. On an afternoon in July 2009, Shen Weirong, Director of the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Research Center at Renmin University, delivered a public lecture at Peking University titled "In Search of Shangri-La: Behind the Demonized and Mystified Tibet." The lecture exclusively focused on the image of Tibet in the West. The "demonized Tibet" refers to the new socialist Tibet, which is pejoratively portrayed in Western media, and the "mystified Tibet" is the imagined Tibet in the West. Shen spoke:

> Some Westerners mystify Tibet. This fantasized Tibet has nothing to do with the real, material Tibet. It is a spiritualized, fictitious place which possesses what Western civilization has lost and all the ideals that everyone longs for. It is an imagined place filled with wisdom and compassion, and free from violence and deception. In this imagined place, Tibetans are a green,

> peace-loving people. Everyone, noble or ignoble, man or woman, is equal. There is no exploitation or oppression. Such a Tibet has never existed before and will never occur in the future, either. … To put it simply, Tibet is an indispensible "other" in the minds of Westerners. It is their mirror, their reference for self-identity. It is a spiritual supermarket in post-industrial West. It is a depository of all their fantasies and nostalgias. In this Tibet, their spirit roams freely with inexhaustible pleasure and satisfaction. They love themselves more than they love Tibet.

Du Yongbin, senior researcher at the Chinese Tibetology Research Center, also speaks publicly in a similar vein. Referencing Donald Lopez's book by the same title, he frequently refers to Westerners who imagine Tibet in an ideal way as "the prisoners of Shangri-La." On May 6, 2009, Xinhua Net invited Du for a live interview session called "The Real 'Shangri-La'." Western imagination of Tibet was under his scrutiny:

> Let's put it this way. Their imagined Tibet is Shangri-La which absolutely does not exist. It was the invention of James Hilton [the author of *Lost Horizon*]. … According to our normal thinking, the mystified and fictionalized Tibet is divorced from the reality. However, from a different angle, we see the reason that they idealize and mystify Tibet is because they have the need for "self-help" for the sake of alleviating their spiritual hollowness. Essentially it is because of their selfish needs. In this context, the development and progress in contemporary Tibet shatters their illusory view of Tibet and clashes with the psychology and knowledge of their imagined Tibet. In this regard, their understanding of the real Tibet [socialist Tibet] is negative. This is also the primary reason why some Westerners hold an opposing position on the Tibet Question toward China.
>
> Cheng 2009

Both Shen and Du are well versed in Western scholarly and popular literature concerning Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. Du has traveled numerous times to the US for scholarly research and conferences. He is the translator of Melvyn Goldstein's *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–1953* and Donald Lopez's *Prisoners of Shangri-La*. Shen's Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Research Center was established in 2008. Both are aware that a growing population of Chinese Buddhists also imagine Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism similarly to their Western counterparts. However, this emerging cultural and religious phenomenon in China does not appear in their scholarly research results. Instead, methods of post-colonial studies from the West are activated to qualify Western imagination of Tibet solely as an act of orientalism.

On the surface, both scholars spoke in the same manner as their Western counterparts such as Peter Bishop, Donald Lopez, and Orville Schell who wrote about the Western popular imagination of Tibet. In many ways, the genre and content of their scholarship in this matter also appears identical to their Western counterparts. Admittedly, many Western scholars' critical position toward this growing

collective imagination of Tibet is condescending. Imagination in this context appears to be equated with "falsity," "artificiality," "illusion," and "hallucination," as if those who are imagining Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism were drugged. "Tibet" in this sense is no different from opium sending its consumer into an altered state of mind in which "reality" is deemed absent. In Bishop's writings, Westerners imagine Tibet with "the archetypal style of fantasy" (Bishop 1989:viii). As he writes:

> In a sense, Tibet's peripheral place has given permission for the West to use it as an imaginative escape: a sort of time out, a relaxation of rigid rational censorship. Time and again Tibet has been described with all the qualities of a dream, a collective hallucination.
>
> Bishop1993:16

Likewise, Lopez also criticizes Western Tibetophiles' stereotype of Tibet as "a domain of lost wisdom" (Lopez 1998:6). According to him, this stereotype is the result of:

> a play of opposites: the pristine and the polluted, the authentic and the derivative, the holy and the demonic, the good and the bad. This opposition has functioned throughout the history of Europe's relation to Asia: "West" and "East," "Occident" and "Orient" – each a historical rather than a geographic construct.
>
> ibid.:4

Herein, one can hear Edward Said's post-colonial voice speak. Both "Occident" and "Orient" are the making of the West; therefore, there is no "East" or "Asia" but only the West and its self-imagined mirror. With this logic, it is inevitable that Lopez would pronounce, "We are captives of confines of our own making, we are all prisoners of Shangri-La" (ibid.:1998:13) and that Bishop would state in a similar fashion, "Tibet has consistently been treated as the museum of a fantasized past. It has served as a landmark from which the West has struggled to achieve a sense of its own identity" (Bishop 1993:41). If these statements are true, then what is Tibet? Neither Lopez nor Bishop gives readers a clear idea, nor do their Chinese counterparts. The latter conveniently co-opt the former's perspective into their intention to discredit Western popular fascination with Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, and to make Tibet the same as the rest of the world; thus, "Tibet" is demystified and "Tibetans" are just like "us" in the modernized lowland. From the sentient perspective, it is true that Tibetans are just like everyone else in the world. However, from religious, cultural, aesthetic, and ecological perspectives, Tibet is a place that initiates its visitors' passions and dreams for the ideal destinies of humankind.

In the twenty-first century, despite the demystifying effort of Western and Chinese scholars, Tibet continues to draw attention from non-Tibetans worldwide. Tibet is becoming more and more accessible to non-Tibetans. The conventional wisdom tells us that the exoticity of a place or of a people dissipates

when its remoteness is overcome by outsiders. This is not the case with Tibet. Pilgrims, tourists, and photographers keep pouring into Tibet to bring a message back to their homelands – Tibet is a paradise on earth. In late September, 2009, major popularly viewed websites, such as cctv.com, China.com, Xinhua Net, and sohu.com all listed six tourist destinations as "The Six Paradises on Earth that Gods and Spirits all yearn for." All six places are in Western China, and four of those six are in Tibet, namely Lake Namtso (གནམ་མཚོ།), Tsada Tholing (རྩ་མདའ་མཐོ་ལྡིང་།), Lake Mapham Yutso (མ་ཕམ་གཡུ་མཚོ།), and Potala Palace.

In my ethnographic experience with both Chinese and Western Buddhists, I see Tibet as a drug, a medicine, a stimulant, or a psychedelic without chemical properties. It is a hallucinogen but not a hallucination. It is an organic psychoactive medium for the initiation into an instant appreciation of an indigenous cultural–natural environment that has been sustained with traditional religious practices and ecological worldviews. The initiant experiences intoxication, delirium, trance, euphoria, rejuvenation, and rebirth in either symbolic or direct terms. It is an experience of conversion and revolution. Those who fail this initiation are most likely afraid of Tibet's height and perceived scarcity of oxygen, and have internalized the modern debasing of religion as superstition. Tibet does not require imagination from its visitors for appreciation. It both is an imagination and it generates imagination itself. This imagination manifests itself in concrete material and ritual terms. To enter Tibet is to enter an imagination that is an inspiration in both a spiritual and ecological sense.

Contemporary discourse on the imagination of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism is, in essence, another front where the contentions between tradition and modernity, religion and science, and preservation and progress continue. The discourse is dominated by self-elected modern rationalists who tend to exclude imagination from human thinking faculty as if it were the inborn error of humankind, as if ridiculing it, degrading it, and getting rid of it would liberate us from ignorance. Oftentimes, I would like to turn Lopez's cynical assessment of Tibet-inspired popular imagination into a hypothesis rather than a mockery: "Tibet is seen as the cure for an ever-ailing Western civilization, a tonic to restore its spirit" (Lopez 1998:8). I replace "Western civilization" with "modern civilization" in a singular sense. This excessively material-based modern civilization is finding a pinnacle in China's ten-percent economic growth as well as in contaminants in the smoggy and identical urban landscapes, and the self-centered ethos and psychology of young Chinese urbanites. In this context, modernized China is polluted, while most regions of Tibet remain clean and sublime both environmentally and religiously, though they too are facing the advancing modernization of China. How wrong could it be, when a growing number of urbanites begin to imagine a reversal of time toward a place referenced from Tibet, where they feel they could find or regain a paradisaic living environment?

In *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography*, Edward Relphs writes,

> the paradox of modern landscapes is that they are dehumanizing because they are excessively humanized. There is almost nothing in them that has not been conceived and planned so that it will serve those human needs which can be

> assessed in terms of efficiency or improved material conditions. But there is almost nothing in them that can happen spontaneously, autonomously or accidentally, or which expresses human emotions and feelings.
>
> Relphs 1981:104

More precisely, modern urban landscapes are the projection of our modern mindscape based on the history and cultural practice of industrialization and modernization worldwide. Chinese urban landscapes in particular have been rigidly fashioned by two modernities, namely the Marxist modernity of the latter half of the twentieth century and the addition of the capitalist modernity of the present. The emergence of Tibetan Buddhism and its landscape in the urban-based, modern mindscape begins to provoke a string of existential, environmental, and spiritual reflections on the ultimate meanings of human life. Against this backdrop, Tibetan Buddhism's gaining popularity in and outside China is not a coincidence but is almost an inevitability, as nowhere else on earth could a religion and its native environment compete with Tibet's magnificent landscape and the religion-oriented humanism in it. In this regard, Tibetan Buddhism to non-Tibetans is more than just a form of Buddhism. It is an earth-inspired religion. It resonates with worldwide environmental movements and the return of once suppressed land-based religions. Thus, the understanding of the religiosity of the Tibetan landscape is crucial in understanding the origins of the heightened popular imagination of Tibet.

In Bishop's reading of Western travel writings about Tibet, he notices that the religion and landscape of Tibet are the primary source of Western imagination of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. In my own experience, Tibetan religion and landscape mutually embed and saturate each other; as I discussed in Chapter 3, one cannot leave the other. Tibetan Buddhism moves with the earth, the waters, and the sky in Tibet, while the landscape is humanized with deities, spirits, and wandering souls of past times. Both the religious mindscape and natural landscape interact and bond with each other in the same enclosure known in Tibetan language as *jigten* (འཇིག་རྟེན།), or the realm of all sentient beings. According to UNESCO's categorization of cultural landscape, the Tibetan landscape coincides with its definition of "the associative cultural landscape" which is shaped by "powerful religious, artistic or other cultural meanings invested in natural features rather than in material culture or monuments, which are insignificant or absent" (Knapp and Ashmore 2000:9). In archeology of landscape, this type of landscape is also known as the "ideational landscape" which is both imaginative in the sense of being a mental image of something and emotional in the sense of cultivating or eliciting some spiritual value or ideal (ibid.:12).

In both Chinese and Western scholars' critiques of popular imagination of Tibet, there is a visible subjective separation of Tibet from the rest of the world when they classify Tibet as a non-Tibetan or Western-made mirror reflecting the self-identity of non-Tibetans with minimum Tibetan contents. Although Tibet does mirror the self of the pilgrim, however it is understood, it is more than just a mirror. It initiates and inspires from the pilgrim the sublime or "what is absolutely great" (Kant 1980:497) in the aesthetic sense. Kant says, "It is a greatness comparable to itself

alone. Hence, it comes that the sublime is not to be looked for in the things of nature, but only in our own ideas" (ibid.:498). To a novice pilgrim who sets his or her foot in Tibet for the first time, it is the aesthetics, in this Kantian sense, that strike the mind with the absolute greatness of the Tibetan landscape, revealing themselves in the immensity of the earth and the scarcity of human beings. The magnificence, expansiveness, and breath-taking beauty of the landscape awaken the "faculty of the mind transcending every standard of sense" (ibid.:498). It is the innate religiosity of the mind which begins to absorb the magnitude of the natural environment, surrounding it in aesthetic terms. As the cliché among pilgrims and travelers goes, everyone is a photographer when he or she enters Tibet. Tibet in real time fits the initial English meaning of landscape, which signifies picturesque, idyllic, and artistic qualities. Thus, the aesthetic faculty of the pilgrim and the picturesque quality of Tibetan landscape are infused.

From the perspective of the phenomenology of landscape, the human imagination has not stopped searching for mythical places such as Shambhala, Penglai (Taoist), the Garden of Eden, and El Dorado. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka writes, "The human being looks to a far-off horizon seeking total transcendence over the servitude that life imposes, over its unbending requirements" (Tymieniecka 1995:17). This is a fundamental motif of pilgrimage throughout human history. The current non-Tibetan Buddhists' inspiration and imagination toward Tibet resembles the ancient relationship between India and Tibet. It is asymmetrical in nature, meaning that, as Toni Huber points out, "Over time, the Tibetans acquired vast amounts of cultural knowledge and techniques from India. However, for their part, Indians over the centuries were never much interested in anything the Tibetans had to offer, except of course the gold which they traditionally carried south over the Himalayas as payment for the knowledge being received from their Indian gurus" (Huber 2008:3). History repeats itself in the twenty-first century. This time, Tibetan gurus receive wealth from their disciples and seekers of tantric knowledge from different nations, while non-Tibetans who enter Tibet are enchanted by the mesmerizing Tibetan religious rituals and landscape.

In this regard, topophilia in the case of Tibet is not merely a subjective aesthetic experience in which one only encounters a painting-like natural scene with no actual lives in it or as a lifeless physical entity. In *The Place of the Sublime*, Edward Casey proposes that the sublime signifies "threshold" and "porosity" (Casey 1997:80). The former refers to "crossing a threshold like a rite of passage which entails movement," while the latter is concerned with "a scene of open places" or "a movement across or through places" (ibid.:80). According to Casey, a sublime landscape is "a privileged place, or rather, a pre-eminent set of places in which the sublime may appear" (ibid.:79). From this perspective, the Tibetan landscape fits this privileged place as it possesses both "might" (*Macht*) and "magnitude" (*Grösse*), two attributes of a natural environment which incite the sublimity of the human mind (ibid.:72). Obviously, it is the might of Tibet's physical environment that triggers the latent sublimity in the mind of the pilgrim. It is then one-sided if the sublime only exists within human subjectivity. The sublime could also be the property of Tibet's landscape; therefore, it is reasonable to see Tibetan landscape with a subjectivity of its own. In this sense, the non-Tibetan pilgrim's topophilia

for Tibet comes from a sublime experience crossing a series of thresholds of his or her mindscape and Tibetan landscape.

From a Tibetan Buddhist perspective, as discussed in Chapter 3, the Tibetan landscape is the foreground rather than background of human activities. It is the home of all sentient beings in the highest plateau of the world. The land is saturated with deities and spirits. The Tibetan landscape possesses its own subjectivity – that is, the total subjectivity of the sentience in this unique part of the earth. Thus, the landscape is not an inanimate, physical background where only human activities are found; instead, it is animated with all sentient spirits including those of humans and deities. In this regard, the Tibetan landscape, like a human mind, also possesses the innate sublimity or the absolute greatness that Kant touched on. It is most appropriate to call such sublimity "ecosublimity," (Rozell 2006) which is derived from Christine L. Oravec's work on natural sublimity. It takes three stages to reach the full mental awareness of this concept, as Rozelle cites from Oravec's *To Stand Outside Oneself*:

> The three stages were, first, apprehension, in which the individual subject encounters an object larger and greater than the self; second, awe, oppression, or even depression – in some versions fear or potential fear – in which the individual recognizes the relative greatness of the object and the relative weakness or limits of the self; and, third, exaltation, in which the individual is conceptually or psychically enlarged as the greatness of the object is realized and the individual identifies with that greatness.
>
> Rozelle 2006:203

These three stages show that the experience of ecosublimity is an experience of an intersubjective exchange between the sublimity in the "might" of nature and the sublimity in the human subjective mind. It is noteworthy that it is the sublimity of natural awe that awakens its human counterpart. When both are mutually recognized, ecosublimity and human-sublimity are one and the same. Separating each from the other is not possible. This inner "absolute greatness" of human consciousness and the landscape is the awe-inspiring state of being. The interdependence of the natural and humanly "absolute greatness" only demonstrates that everything exists in the same enclosure. Thinking, imagining, and dreaming are eco-dependent processes. The coordinates of mindscape and landscape, in the case of humans' understanding of the sublime, overlap and may even be the same. It is what Edward Casey calls the "transcendental subjectivity" at work, which is "located neither inside the estimating subject nor in estimated objects but in the whole of a given landscape" (Casey 1997:78). In the context of Tibet, this totality of natural landscape and human mindscape, transcendental in nature, is the sublime itself, that is, the combination of the magnitude of Tibetan landscape and the sublime state of the mind.

Again, it is necessary to highlight the subjectivity of the Tibetan landscape when we attempt to make sense of why and how the intensity of the popular imagination of Tibet is almost contagious in nature. This territorial subjectivity is Tibet's land-based mythological-historical narrative of its ancestral past and the

spirit-world which shares the same living space with humans and other life forms. It is "natural" and "wild" but named and cared for with humans' religious and spiritual reverence. In her study of Mongolian landscape, Caroline Humphrey, unlike many of her Western colleagues who objectify and detach landscape from human subjectivity, treats landscape "as something with energies far greater than the human" (Humphrey 2003:135). Such energies come from both ancestors and spirits of the aboriginals. She sees the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Mongolian landscape respectively as "the chiefly landscape" and "the shamanic landscape." The chiefly landscape often manifests itself in high mountains as "chiefs and elders created their own landscapes with anthropomorphic spirits of mountains and other dominant objects" (ibid.:148); whereas the shamanic landscape is the world of the earthly deities and spirits of deceased shamans and common people (ibid.:136). The dynamics of Tibetan landscape resemble Humphrey's description of the Mongolian landscape, as it also possesses vertical and horizontal dimensions, as mentioned in Chapter 3. I call the vertical dimension "the kingly mode" and the horizontal dimension "the spirit mode." Both modes coexist with, overlap, and crisscross each other in the same landscape as the mythical and historical kings of Tibet are also revered as powerful spirits. The location of each Tibetan settlement is a power-location with both the kingly mode and the spirit mode.

As a mountain-centered landscape, Tibetan landscape's kingly mode expresses itself in the "blood relations" of the clusters of major mountain ranges in all three regions of Tibet. As discussed in Chapter 3, among the anthropomorphized, original nine mountain spirits, Ode Gungyel is the father of all other eight spirits. His "blood line" extends from Üzang to Kham and Amdo. (Mt.) Amni Machen of Amdo is among the eight original spirits. In the case of Rachekyi, the small tantric yogi village in eastern Amdo, local folk are reminded daily of their mythical and historical past in terms of their cultural and political origin as (Mt.) Ami Gotzi, the highest local spirit mountain, is a son of Amni Machen; therefore, this male mountain spirit is a grandson of Ode Gungyel. This vertical mode of Tibetan landscape holds a political history of this ancient Tibetan civilization that is kingly centered. Each location is an extension of the original center or the original king himself. The reverence to the mountains is the same as the reverence to one's ancestors. At the same time, the spirit mode of the Tibetan landscape also converts the kings and the descendants of the kings into protective spirits while still maintaining their human images. Since the eleventh century, when the Bengali master Atisha and his Tibetan disciple and translator Renchen Zangpo reintroduced Buddhism to Tibet after the anti-Buddhist destruction mostly brought by King Landarma, Buddhism has dominated the Tibetan religious landscape (Lopez 1997:20; Conze 2000:106). However, lay Tibetan Buddhists nevertheless continue to revere the indigenous spirit world and the ancestral past, though still within the Buddhist framework. Most local deities and spirits have been converted to Buddhism and become Dharma protectors who are subordinate to the Buddha. They are no longer in the divine realm; instead they are reassigned to the sentient realm. They continue to possess supernatural power but are humans' equals as they, like humans, are all sentient and subject to the cycle of birth and death.

Both kingly and spirit modes show that "blood relations" exist between ancestors, living people, spirits, and land. The land is then not merely earth alone, but is spirited and humanized. Tibetan mountain chains are the "arteries" of the Tibetan landscape. Most human settlements are situated in the vicinity of these "arteries." They are like Australian Aboriginals' "songlines." The mountain ranges are the warp and woof which weaves together the Tibetan landscape. All locations of human settlement are thus networked as the land is encoded with myth and history, and embedded with perennial spirits and souls of ancestors. Thus, the Tibetan landscape is also "the referent for much of the symbolism … [and] an intervening sign system that serves the purpose of passing on information about the ancestral past" (Morphy 2003:186). It is an anthropomorphized spirit world which has accompanied humans since ancient times.

Most Westerners' imagination about and fascination with Tibet originates from the Western aesthetic tradition and the images of the Garden of Eden, Avalon, and Mt. Olympus because the magnitude and magnificence of the Tibetan landscape is the materialized sample of these archetypes of heavenly realms in human mythologies and collective imaginations. In this sense, the Tibetan landscape does mirror Western mythological and utopian worlds. But, to go beyond this self-mirrorization, one has to accept the subjectivity of the Tibetan landscape or the combined subjective realm of living humans, spirits, ancestors, and other sentient beings. In spite of the global sociopolitical fact that the Tibetan Question complicates the genuine, sympathetic understanding of popular imagination of Tibet, Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism will continue kindling more imagination worldwide.

Tibetan Buddhism outside of Tibet is an ecospirituality in the midst of the current globalization of religion. It is not merely a form of Buddhism in the traditional sense. Its discourse of enlightenment is not only a mind work on *satori* in an abstract sense, or a meditation session in a Californian Zen center during which your master tells you to think nothing, or an invocation of the Buddhist Pureland imagined as a remote mental or cosmic location. In addition to the guided, active visualization of oneself as an enlightened being and imagination of the world around oneself as the enlightened world, the practice of Tibetan Buddhism is inextricably socially, politically, and ecologically engaged. The mindscape of the practitioner and the landscape of Tibet are entwined. In this unique ecospirituality, Tibet's human-natural landscape overwhelms, inspires, and intensifies the mindscape of the practitioner with both Buddhist-shamanic ritual prowess and humanitarian issues resulting from China's modernization in its ideological and technological manifestations. The Chinese state and its scholars persistently charge that the worldwide popular imagination of Tibet pertains to the West's vain attempt to turn modern Tibet back to the time of its alleged slavery system; however, from the ecospiritual perspective, the ongoing popular imagination of Tibet is not a mental chimera but finds its roots in the concerns of the global public about the environmentally and culturally destructive nature of the profit-driven, corporate-state allied modernization programs in Tibetan regions. To those enchanted non-Tibetan Buddhists, Tibet, as a site of global ecospirituality, is not simply a recipient of the projection of the sublime imagination from the human subjective realm. It has its own agency in inspiring and imbuing its visitors

with its own sublime imagination, as its awe-inspiring landscape speaks for itself. It is not the serfdom or the penal system of the traditional Tibetan society that contemporary Tibetophiles want to embrace, but the humanized, spiritized habitat of Tibet that they want to preserve and cherish. The ecospiritual Tibet is found in neither Old Tibet nor New Tibet, but in the mindscape of Tibetan Buddhism and indigenous religious traditions and the natural landscape of Tibet.

Glossary

Bla-ri (བླ་རི།) soul-mountain. It refers to those mountains which host souls of historical saints or an entire living community. བླ། (*bla*) means "soul," which, unlike རྣམ་ཤེས། (*rnam shes*), does not necessarily reside in one's body but can be entrusted to a sacred site, e.g., a mountain, a lake, or a powerful animal.

Brtan dgra (བསྟན་དགྲ) enemy of the teachings (Buddha Dharma).

Brtan sruñg (བསྟན་སྲུང་།) protector of the teachings (Buddha Dharma).

Btsan (བཙན།) demons.

Chenjol (འཕྲིན་བཅོལ།) ritual texts that invoke the protection from Dharma protective deities and local spirits for one's worldly affairs. It is also spelled as *vphrin-bcol*.

Chiedi (ཆོས་སྡེ།) lay subjects of a monastic establishment. Also spelled *chos sde*.

Chos rgyal (ཆོས་རྒྱལ།) Dharma king. It refers to those accomplished lamas with numerous disciples.

Chos skyong srung ma (ཆོས་སྐྱོང་སྲུང་མ།) Dharma protective deities.

Chos srid zung vbrel (ཆོས་སྲིད་ཟུང་འབྲེལ།) a polity that combines religion and conventional politics.

Denbe ghralha (བདུན་པའི་དགྲ་ལྷ།) a festival honoring local warrior gods in Amdo in the seventh month of the lunar calendar. It is also transliterated as *bdunpa'l-lha*.

Dgra-lha (དགྲ་ལྷ།) warrior god who defeats one's enemy.

Dgrawo (དགྲ་བོ།) enemy.

Domshee (ལྡོམ་སྲས།) wandering son. It is also transliterated as *ldom sras*.

Dorje chogrog (རྡོ་རྗེ་ཆོས་གྲོགས།) friends of Vajrayana Buddhism. It is also transliterated as *rdo rje chos grogs*.

Dugbar lubzi (ལྡོག་བར་ལབ་ཙེ།) a festival invoking blessings from local deities on the tenth day of the first month of the Tibetan calendar. It is also pronounced as *ldog bar lab tse*.

Dunhuang Yik Rnying (ཏུན་ཧོང་ཡིག་རྙིང་།) a body of Tibetan texts excavated from Dunhuang Caves in Gansu Province. It consists of Tibetan texts of literature, art, history, Buddhist sutras, medicine and other categories.

Dzada tuling (རྫ་མདའ་མཐོ་གླིང་།) a scenic place in Central Tibet.

Dzambhala (ཛམ་བྷ་ལ།) the name of a wealth god. It is known as Norlhazhig (ནོར་ལྷ་ཞིག).

Dzogchen (རྫོགས་ཆེན།) the abbreviation for *dzogba chenpo* (རྫོགས་པ་ཆེན་པོ།) or the Great Perfection. It is the primary teaching of Nyingmapa. Its fundamental view

is that one's enlightenment is found in the primordial nature of sentience. *Dzogba* means "accomplishment," "perfection," and "completion." Thus, it is also translated as the Great Completion.

Ghama (ཀརྨ།) transliteration of Sanskrit word *karma*.

Gnas mjal (གནས་མཇལ།) pilgrimage.

Gnas mjal ba (གནས་མཇལ་བ།) pilgrim.

Gnas ri (གནས་རི།) sacred mountains.

Gnyan (གཉན།) a type of earthly demon which brings epidemics and other illnesses to humans and livestock.

Hung (དབང་།) initiation or authorization from a high lama for a given practice. It also connotes "pouring into" or "filling in." In a formal initiation ceremony, the participant is required to visualize him- or herself as a vessel of Buddha Dharma which is being filled in with the purifying power of a given lineage-based teaching. It is pronounced as *wang* in Lhasa dialect.

Jegden (འཇིག་རྟེན།) the physical world. In the Buddhist context, it mostly refers to the sentient world. It is also transliterated as *vjig rten*.

Khandrolma (མཁའ་འགྲོ་མ།) translation of the Sanskrit word *dakini*. It refers to accomplished female tantric practitioners or female celestial beings born in pure realms. Its literal translation is "female sky-walker" or "a woman who walks in the sky." In the Tibetan context, a *dakini* is often a spiritual companion of a tantric master. Its transliteration is also spelled as *mkhav vgro ma*.

Klu (ཀླུ།) translation of Sanskrit word *naga* or dragon. In Tibetan Buddhist context, *klu* refers to a waterborne, supernatural being with snake body and human head.

Klu-vbum-dhar-po (ཀླུ་འབུམ་དཀར་པོ།) one of the three Bonpo texts that contains the folk narratives of the indigenous Tibetan pantheon.

Le-hung (ལས་དབང་།) also transliterated as *lasdbang*, it refers to a given interpersonal affinity which is seen as the result of encounters in past lifetimes.

Lha (ལྷ།) gods and goddesses.

Lung (ལུང་།) teachings of a given lineage. *Lung* often accompanies *hung* (དབང་། initiation). Upon completing *hung*, the lama transmits *lung* (teachings) to his initiation participants.

Mamo (མ་མོ།) a female demon which brings illnesses to humans.

Man ngag (མན་ངག) secret oral instructions. It also refers to pithy formulae or "short cuts" orally transmitted from one's tantric lama.

Ma-rig-pa (མ་རིག་པ།) ignorance.

Mda (མདའ།) arrow.

Menang (རྨི་སྣང་།) dream state.

Mi khom pa brgyad (མི་ཁོམ་པ་བརྒྱད།) the eight realms/states of being without freedom to practise Buddha's teachings. They are the realms of hells, animal, hungry ghost, and isolated places, birth with incomplete sense organs, and the time without the Buddha's teachings.

Mngonhi (མངོན་ཤེས།) extraordinary spiritual knowledge that enables the accomplished person to perform miracles, perceive others' thoughts, recollect memories of past lifetimes, foretell future events, and other extraordinary deeds. It is often spelled as *mngon shes*.

Nag phyogs (ནག་ཕྱོགས།) harmful realm.

Nam zhes (རྣམ་ཤེས།) consciousness or soul which dwells in the body. It is also spelled as *rnam shes*. It departs from the body when the person dies.

Nang vgro (ནང་འགྲོ།) Inner practice referring to the esoteric part of *dzogchen*. It requires the completion of the preliminary practice (*ngodzo*) and receiving of formal Dzogchen initiation from a qualified lama.

Ngakpa/ngakma (སྔགས་པ། སྔགས་མ།) male/female lay tantric practitioners mostly in Nyingmapa. Their white robes mark the distinction from those ordained in monastic orders. *Nga* means "secret" or "secret teachings." They are also commonly called "yogis/yoginis." The terms are also spelled as *sngags pa*/ *sngags ma*.

Ngondzo (སྔོན་འགྲོ།) preparatory practice of *dzogchen* or the Great Perfection which is the primary tantric teaching of Nyingma lineages. It is the prerequisite for the formal practice. It is also spelled as *sngon vgro*.

Ngowo (ངོ་བོ།) essence or self-nature. It is also pronounced as *ngobo* in central Tibetan dialect.

Nyidnang (གཉིད་སྣང་།) the sleeping state or the unawakened state.

Nyi mavi vkhor lo (ཉི་མའི་འཁོར་ལོ།) the sun-wheel which is a ritual instrument for invoking favorable weather.

Nyingmapa (རྙིང་མ་པ།) one of the branches of Tibetan Buddhism. It is often regarded as the oldest sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

Orcha (ཨུར་ཆ།) a slingshot made out of sheep or yak skin, used for herding purposes.

Phowa (འཕོ་བ།) transference. It mostly refers to the transference of one's consciousness after death.

Rangbyung (རང་བྱུང་།) nature or a natural state of being without artificial intervention or alteration. It is pronounced as *rangshong*.

Ranghung (རང་དབང་།) also pronounced as *rangdbang* or, it means "personal freedom." *Rang* (རང་།) means "self" and *dbang* (དབང་།) means "power" or "authority." Freedom in Tibetan connotes self-determination.

Rangsa (རང་ས།) place where one's home is. In Buddhist practice, it refers to the current state of one's practice.

Rangshul (རང་ཤུལ།) places where one has lived or paths which one has traversed.

Rimé (རིས་མེད།) also commonly spelled as *rismed* in English, it means absence of bias and discrimination. In Tibetan Buddhist history, it refers to the nineteenth-century non-sectarian movement in eastern Tibet among Nyingmapa, Kagyupa and Sakyapa.

Sangchod (བསང་མཆོད།) also transliterated as *bsang mchod*, it is a type of ritual text for the invocation of local spirits and deities for the fulfillment of one's worldly needs and wishes.

Sangpa (སངས་བ།) to purify; to cleanse; to awaken.

Semjan (སེམས་ཅན།) spelled as *semscan* in English, it means sentience or sentient beings.

Ser-ba-sruangs-bavi-sngags-bzhugs-so (སེར་བ་སྲུངས་བའི་སྔགས་བཞུགས་སོ།) a weather-reading ritual text entitled "The Knack of Storm Prevention." It is commonly used by tantric yogis in eastern Amdo.

Skorra (སྐོར་ར།) circumambulation.

Sku zhabs (སྐུ་ཞབས།) honorific title for monk in Lhasa dialect.

Smyon (སྨྱོན།) madness. In the Buddhist context, *smyon* refers to the state of spiritual transcendence that is manifested in conventionally deemed mad or crazy expressions.

Sngags brgyb pai yungs kar sogs (སྔགས་བརྒྱབ་པའི་ཡུངས་ཀར་སོགས།) translates as "pellets of secret teachings" which are usually mustard seeds or highland barley seeds empowered by tantric rituals for use as ritual weapons used to counteract harmful deeds of local spirits and deities.

Sprin nak ktor ba (སྤྲིན་ནག་གཏོར་བ།) cloud herding or dispersing.

Srid pa chags pa'i lha dge (སྲིད་པ་ཆགས་པའི་ལྷ་དགུ) the nine primordial mountain spirits of Tibet. They are regarded as the nine aboriginal earthly deities of Tibet. Their names are (1) Ode ungye (འོ་དེ་གུང་རྒྱལ།), (2) Yarlha Shompo (ཡར་ལྷ་ཤམ་པོ།), (3) Kawa Karpo (ཁ་བ་དཀར་པོ།), (4) Machen Pomra (རྨ་ཆེན་སྤོམ་ར།), (5) Zhoglha Shugpo (ཞོགས་ལྷ་ཕྱུག་པོ།), (6) Nodchan Gangzang (གནོད་སྦྱིན་གང་བཟང་།), (7) Sygogchen Ldongra (སྒོགས་ཆེན་ལྡོང་ར།), (8) Gampo Lhakye (སྐམ་པོ་ལྷ་བརྩེ།), (9) Nyenchen Tanglha (གཉན་ཆེན་ཐང་ལྷ།).

Terma (གཏེར་མ།) hidden Dharma treasures. It is also spelled as *gterma*.

Terser (གཏེར་གསར།) new treasure-revealing tradition of Nyingmapa. It is based on Dudjom Rinpoche's lineage. It is also transliterated as *gter gser*.

Terton (གཏེར་སྟོན།) treasure-revealer. It refers to those tantric lamas who are able to foresee the whereabouts of Dharma treasures hidden by previous masters. It is also spelled as *gter ston*.

Tsam (མཚམས།) also transliterated as *mtshams*, it refers to solitary retreat. *Tsam* literally means "to close" or "to shut down."

Tsehwang (ཚེ་དབང་།) also transliterated as *tsedbang*, it means "longevity empowerment" associated with *tsebudmed* (ཚེ་དཔག་མེད།) or the Longevity Buddha.

Tulku (སྤྲུལ་སྐུ།) reincarnate lama.

Tulwa (སྤྲུལ་བ།) transformation; illusion. It is also pronounced as *tulba* in Central Tibetan dialect.

Zur-gsum (ཟུར་གསུམ།) the three pundits of Zur clan who played critical roles in systematizing the teachings of Nyingmapa in the eleventh century. See page 21.

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